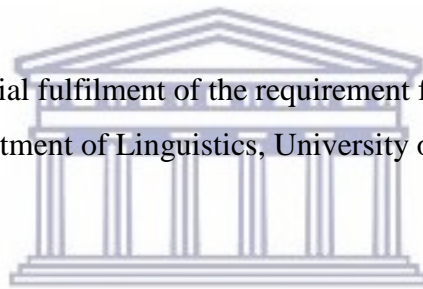**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS

Youth Multilingualism and Discourses of Disability:
An Intersectional Approach

Jason Richardson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Magister
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Supervisor: Dr Quentin E. Williams

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Youth Multilingualism and Discourses of Disability:

An Intersectional Approach

by

Jason Michael Richardson

Abstract

Disability, as a topic of investigation, is considerably overlooked in the discipline of sociolinguistics. This thesis aims to bridge the gap between disability and sociolinguistics studies, as I critically explore the role language and multilingualism plays in the way we understand and construct the discourses of disability.

Based on a year-long ethnographic study at what is defined as a "special needs school", I offer a first-hand description of being a researcher with a disability through personal anecdotes. In these anecdotes, I account for my own positionality to highlight the importance of reflectivity and positionality when doing ethnographic fieldwork. Aside from these personal anecdotes, I also capture everyday interactions among young disabled people. In order to analyse these disabled youth multilingual interactions, I applied the notions of stylization, enregisterment and embodied intersectionality. In these examinations, we are able to see how multilingualism is used to negotiate a position of being seen as disabled. By looking at these personal anecdotes and everyday interactions as whole, the study provides a more comprehensive view of the way we talk and represent disability. I conclude this thesis by offering a new direction for disability and youth multilingualism studies, a direction that emphasises the importance of positionality when doing research on the agency of disabled people.

Key words: Disability, Discourse, Youth, Multilingualism, Intersectionality, Stylization and Enregisterment

Declaration

I declare that *Youth Multilingualism and Discourses of Disability: An Intersectional Approach,* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name: Jason Michael Richardson

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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Acknowledgments – Thanks and appreciation

Man! I've waited long to write this. It gives me great honour to show a little love to all the people that have helped me get to this point and even though I may not be able to thank each and everyone here individually it gives me great pleasure to say thank to you all!
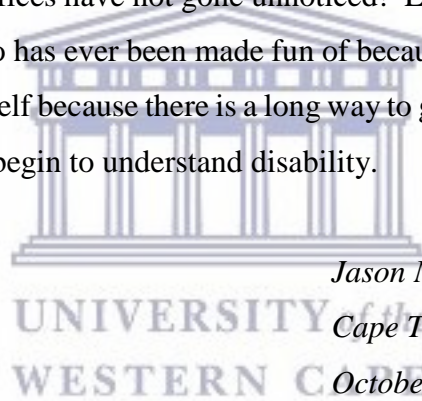
First, I would like to thank my supervisor *Quentin Emmanuel Williams (Dr Q).* Thank you for all the "good talk"[s] (the thing you would always say as I left your office). I would also like to thank you for your tutelage; it has helped me reach new intellectual heights. Your patience and motivation has help me every step of the way and made this task a liitte easier. I truly owe you and Veronique a lot! I would also like to thank the Department of Linguistics at The University of the Western Cape (UWC) and especially the staff members at the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR). Ms Mooniq Shaikjee, Dr Amiena Peck, Prof. Zannie Bock, Mr Sam Mabija and of course, Mrs Avril Grovers. I've had a blast working with you all over the past two years. I'll miss you all!

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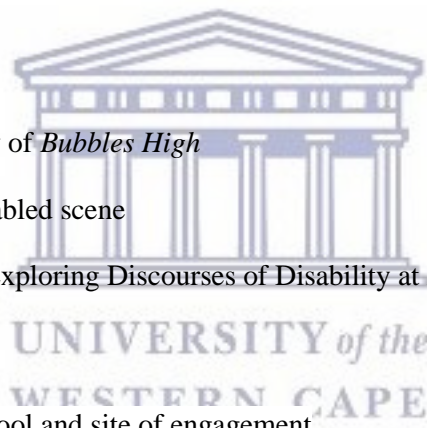
Jason Michael Richardson

Cape Town,

October 2018

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Transcription Key

[	: overlapping utterances
=	: latching
?	: indicates a question or rising tone
.	: indicates a stopping fall in tone
,	: indicates a slightly rising tone giving a sense of continuation
!	: indicates an animated tone
:	: indicates a stretched sound
↑	: indicates a marked rise in pitch
↓	: indicates a marked lowering of pitch
> <	: indicates a faster pace at which the utterance was said
CAPS	: indicates the part of the utterance which is louder than the surrounding talk
<u>did</u>	: underlining indicates emphasis
(( ))	: used for vocalisations not easy to spell out or for special characteristics of talk
( )	: unclear word
(did)	: guess at unclear word
-	: indicates a short untimed pause
(0.3)	: indicates the length of pause in seconds

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Discourses of Disability, Interaction and Young Multilingual Speakers

1.0 Negotiating Disability and Researching Youth Multilingualism: My story

I was born in 1994, the youngest son of five children, but I wasn't like my four siblings. I was different; my family just didn't know it yet. It would take doctors nearly a year to figure out that I was 'special' and tell my mom that her son would never be able to walk. To this day, I have fond memories of my mother telling me this story and how, at the age of three, I took my first ten steps in 1997, a year that would prove to be a busy time for my family and me as we had just moved back to Cape Town after living in Johannesburg for two years. A few months later I was set to start school and, because of my cerebral palsy (henceforth CP)[1], I could not go to the same school as my siblings. I had to go to a 'special school', I was told. And when my mother and I arrived at school on the first day, I saw just what made this school special - there were other disabled children just like me.

Growing up I knew I was different; the other children would stare when I walked, ran or participated in any activity that required physical movement. In all honesty, those gazes were not something that truly bothered me. My teenage years coincided with a time where disability, and my disability in particular, began to be a significant factor in my life. Going out to events like parties and movies was something that I did reluctantly. The stare that every physically disabled person gets throughout his or her life was now something I tried to avoid as much as I could. And along with the stare, or what I like to call the 'curious gaze'[2], you would get the occasional curious question with regards to one's disability; the most notable one for me was *"does it hurt when you walk?"* But like most uncomfortable things, I became used to it as I grew older. By the time I completed high school in 2012, I was more open about speaking about my disability. Sometimes I would even answer the curious questions before they were asked. As I sit and write this, I realize that the more I spoke about my disability, the more others seemed to understand it.

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[1] Cerebral palsy is defined as a neurological disorder that affects movement of the body.
[2] The curious gaze refers to the way an able-bodied person unintentionally stares at a disabled person.

Before I embarked on this study, I asked myself, when do you talk about your disability? When did others? What do you and others say about it? As I think back, I remember that I did not speak about my disability that often, and when I did, it would be to explain my condition. In some way, this represents the importance of language for understanding disability, as I was not disabled until I spoke about it. It is with me and will always be, but it only comes into being when it is spoken about. My disability was thus constructed in two main ways: (1) it was nothing but an irrelevant characteristic when it was not spoken about; and (2) it became relevant when it was spoken about and was shaped by the context in which it was spoken.

I start this thesis this way because I am keen to outline my position as I hope to demonstrate the importance of positionality when study the agency and voice of young disabled multilingual speakers. Here agency simply means the ability to bring about institutional change, and voice is the ability to make ourselves heard (Blommaert, 2005).

This project developed out of the interest to understand how we talk about disability, multilingualism, the agency and voices of the disabled body, and how such bodies shape our ideas of 'ableness' and 'disabledness'. To satisfy these interests, in the course of this research study, I approached the work of Discourse analyst and Disability scholar Jan Grue (2011) who for decades has argued that disability studies is a discipline that is still in its infancy. Many scholars working in different fields of humanities today are building a new body of knowledge that works towards understanding disability from a social perspective, and not necessarily a medical perspective (See Grue, 2015; Alzidjaly, 2015; Shakespeare, 2018). This is because, currently, "the identity marker of disability is often [overshadowed by] other topics such race and gender" (Grue, 2011: 536). I find this both exciting and deeply problematic, because as a discipline, this focus on the social is not an issue for sociolinguistics, both in the North and South of the world; in fact, currently sociolinguistics fails to recognize the benefits that the study of disability carries for both expanding our ethical and methodological tools of interpretation. Furthermore, the extent to which disability is overlooked in the field of discourse and multilingualism studies presents not only a gap in research, but also fails to recognize the importance the analysis of multilingualism has for exploring issues of disability.

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Grue's (2015) work on discourses of disability investigates different ways of talking about disability and in turn addresses how different discourses and models of disability shape the discourse of disability. In his earlier work, he argues that "if what constitutes an impairment [and or disability] depends on language and power structures then the study of those structures must be of key importance" (Grue, 2011: 536). To add to that, multilingualism also contributes an important role in the way we construct and deconstruct disability.

1.1 Discourses of Disability: Medical, Social and Interactional

There are many models and discursive ways to define disability, as disability is a complex phenomenon and a polysemic concept. Two models continue to dominate disability studies today: (1) the medical model and (2) the social model. On the one hand, the medical model is the oldest and "locates disability in the individual and presents it as a tragic problem" (Cochrance, 2014: 3). The medical model of disability infers that disability is an inherent part of the person, that disability is shaped as a problem that lives within the individual and as it becomes the main problem of the individual, it is also the cause of social problems. On the other hand, the social model of disability (Oliver, 2004) suggests that 'we' (people with disabilities) are more disabled by the world and society we live in rather than our bodies. The world is ill-equipped to handle our 'different bodies', instead of our bodies being ill-equipped to function in the world.

For the current project, I have drawn on the interactional model of disability. According to Goodley and Swartz (2016: 75), this model has three main aims: (1) to show that "there is a mismatch between the environment and a person's disability; (2) disability is situational and contextual; and (3) disability is relative."

An interactional model of disability, takes both the social and medical models into consideration and looks at the broader social-cultural context, together with the medical condition. The model attempts to recognize that disability is a lived experience that is shaped by the context in which it is spoken about. This model sees culture as an important factor for

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the construction of disability. This echoes Shakespeare's words, who states that "disability is influenced by social relations and culture values" (Shakespeare, 2018: 24). It is from this perspective that I aim to look at disability in this thesis, as I attempt to highlight the role language plays in understanding disability as well as how language is used as a tool to engage with discourses of disability.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This thesis is a sociolinguistic ethnographic study of the discourses of disability at a special needs school in Cape Town. I will analyze how young multilingual speakers with disabilities talk about disability, interact with each other, and stylize and enregister their youth multilingualism. This project is based on approximately eight months of intensive ethnographic field observations, interviews and audio recorded data, as I sought to gather further insight into how young disabled people spoke about disability and race at school. In chapter 5 in particular, we will see how young disabled multilingual speakers talk about race and disability, by analysing how young people talk about food during social interaction.

1.3 Rationale and Problem

The problem that is study looks to address is a discipline problem. As there is a limited body of knowledge that explore how disabled people use language to recapture their agency and voice, the problem in focus here is the lack of knowledge on language and the role it plays in shaping disability discourse. The rationale for this study is inspired by Alzidjaly (2015: 8) who writes: "the role language plays in shaping the experience of disability and in creating discursive exclusion has only been minimally studied. This is deeply problematic as "language is the primary means of identity construction".

The rationale behind this investigation is to develop the current body of knowledge on language and disability, I attempt to expand on disability scholarship and how a sociolinguistic approach to disability can advance the field of disability itself. With this study then, I flesh out a number of implications that will deeply enrich our thinking not only of disability but also of multilingualism.

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This project was developed out of the need to better understand how young disabled multilingual speakers use language to position themselves as agents. In so doing, I argue for an interactional approach to study how young disabled multilingual speakers use language and multilingualism in everyday interactions, as this approach will shed light on the way young multilingual speakers engage with discourses of disability. I also echo Alzidjaly (2015) who argues that we must pay more attention to the role language plays in the interpretation and the reproduction of disability discourses. That said, this thesis builds upon an established body of knowledge of disability and interaction (Grue, 2011; Sibers, 2008; Davis, 2013 and specifically Alzidjaly, 2015), and highlights the important role multilingualism plays in the production of discourses of disability from an interactional perspective.

1.4 Disability and Youth Multilingualism

This thesis formed part of a larger project investigating how young multilingual speakers in South Africa 'do' multilingualism every day in different spaces, and use multilingualism as a way to navigate through lingering post-apartheid racial and gender discourses. In particular, this project aimed to document how three young and vibrant disabled individuals from Bubbles High, the site of investigation, interacted with other young disabled students.

By drawing on current studies that argue for a social approach to multilingualism, I demonstrate how analysing everyday interactions provides us with one of the best ways to highlight the agency and voice of young disabled people. I show how particular registers and varieties (applying Agha's 2007 notion of *enregisterment*) and styles of talk (cf. Coupland's 2007 notion of stylization) were used to demonstrate a sense of youth multilingualism in everyday interaction.

The purpose of this study was therefore to extend the current work on youth multilingualism. To do this, I drew on the work of contemporary multilingualism scholars, particularly the work of Hamilton (1994), Alim (2004), Bucholtz (2011), Kulick & Rydström (2015), and Williams (2017). The works cited here provide a theoretical point of departure to show how young multilingual speakers in South Africa do and engage in multilingual talk.

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This study will specifically develop research on *youth multilingualism* (Williams, 2016). The focus of youth multilingualism intends to redress a gap in current South African sociolinguistic literature with regards to understanding the everyday dynamics of language and disability. To my knowledge, the present study is one of the first that documents the importance that semiotic features such as accents, registers and style have for the agency and voice of young disabled multilingual speakers in the Global South. According to Williams (2016: 113):

> The notion of youth multilingualism advances research on Africa youth language… and in particular South African sociolinguistics scholarship which describes the use of various language varieties, dialects and lects in urban settings and domains… The scholarship on African youth language [and *styles*] is largely descriptive with occasional drawing out of the macro-social implications of how young people use youth languages to work towards urban project identities.

Williams advances the idea of youth language as he describes a new process he calls youth multilingualism. As starting point to his description, he builds on the work of Rajend Meshrie and his associates. The term 'Youth language' mentioned above, emerged in the late 1990s. Since Mesthrie and others placed a special focus on *Tsotsitaals,* Mesthrie (2008:96) defines Tsotsitaals as an umbrella grouping of all [youth] varieties. Over the last decade then in individual and co-authored publications, Mesthrie and his team have worked towards capturing the urban youth varieties mainly spoken by young South African speakers. In his body of work, I have observed that it was important of Meshrie and others to highlight a) who the speakers are and what varieties they use, b) the gender of these said speakers, and c) how these speakers use different varieties to project a youth identity.

Point c outlined above is where Williams (2016:113) pointed to a serious limitation. As he writes: "The scholarship on African youth language [and styles] is largely descriptive with occasional drawing out of the macro-social implications of how young people use youth languages to work towards urban project identities". So in order to address this problem Williams proposed the notion of youth multilingualism which not only helps to see how speakers talk about language, but also how language is use project a youth identity. In so doing

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Williams further as urges us to focus more on the micro-linguistics features as it is in the analyse of micro features that we begin to see how different varieties of are used by young speakers display their identities of within a postcolonial setting like South Africa. Youth Multilingualism then is a process goes beyond investigation that looks who speaks particular languages and why and aims to capture how use said language to portray their identities.

Williams then defines youth multilingualism as a "…cover term for the dynamic and creative use of multilingualism by young multilingual speakers" (Williams, 2016: 113), which lays the groundwork towards contributing to a body of knowledge that (1) aims to rethink old structural-functional holds on multilingualism and, more importantly, (2) describes the process of multilingualism as opposed to offering up and alternative definition (compare Williams, 2017).
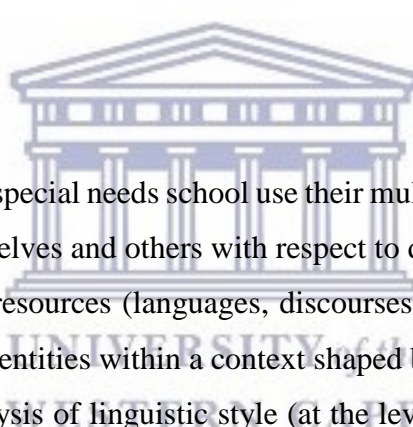
Youth multilingualism is an appropriate starting point as it helps us understand the implications that semiotic features have on the voice and agency of young multilingual speakers in Cape Town (and elsewhere). What youth multilingualism offers the field of multilingualism is a southern perspective of youth language. Youth multilingualism was developed from the need to highlight how marginalized varieties of languages, such as Kaaps, Sabela and Tstotsitaal,[3] stylects as a way to project youth identities. Youth multilingualism builds upon youth language studies by capturing the importance that semiotic features have for reclaiming a sense of voice and agency in a society such as South Africa currently undergoing racial, gender and language transformation. It is a notion that describes a practice of language in use and challenges structural forms of language.

Youth multilingualism is also the perfect entry point to demonstrate how young disabled South Africans use language and multilingualism to display an agentive persona. The notion of youth multilingualism is concerned with issues of voice and agency and highlights how young people recapture their 'voices' through "playful and didactic intermixing of everyday multilingual practices" (Williams, 2016:113), and in so doing, demonstrates the importance of semiotic features and the power these features have in marginal contexts. In fact, youth multilingualism, Williams (2017) argues, provides a way to counter ideologies of language that enforce the

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[3] Kaaps (A variety of Afrikaans), Sabela (a prison register) and Tstotsitaal (an urban variety that is a mixture of Afrikaans, isiXhosa and the prison register).

imaginary borders between 'language' and its varieties. In other words, youth multilingualism is about how young people 'do' multilingualism in South Africa, and the way young multilingual speakers do multilingualism demonstrates how youth multilingual practices provide a sense of agency as well as deconstruct social constructs of language.

By building on the research of youth multilingualism, I aim to critically analyze how discourses of disability are shaped by how young multilingual speakers (abled and disabled) talk about disability. Moreover, I highlight how the young multilingual students interacted with each other and talked about disability during normal school hours. This project will develop research on youth multilingualism by exploring how ideas of disability are spoken about and emerge in youth multilingual interactions. I will explore how young disabled speakers use language and other semiotic resources to either challenge or reproduce stereotypical ideologies of disability. As an entry point, I asked:

(1) How do youth at a special needs school use their multilingual resources to construct and position themselves and others with respect to disability?
(2) Which discursive resources (languages, discourses, genres and registers) do they use to style their identities within a context shaped by discourse of disability?
(3) What does an analysis of linguistic style (at the level of discourse) indicate about the way they engage with broader discourses of disability?

1.5 Theory and Methodology of study

The above questions were developed out of an interest to analyze micro-linguistic features and discourses of disability. In other words, this study will focus on how particular semiotics such as registers, styles are used in the communicative meaning making processes. To this end, this project aims to build upon the work of Williams (2016) by suggesting an interactional approach to the study of disability and youth multilingualism. This is my contribution to the field of disability studies as I aim to use youth multilingualism to build upon current disability studies. My main aim of this thesis is to describe how young disabled people use the micro-linguistic features of youth multilingualism to construct and position themselves with regards to their disability.

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Another important concern of this project is also to show how disability intersects with other identities. Crenshaw (1989) introduced the notion of intersectionality to demonstrate how structural categories of race and gender work together to shape and position women in society. According to Levon (2015: 297),
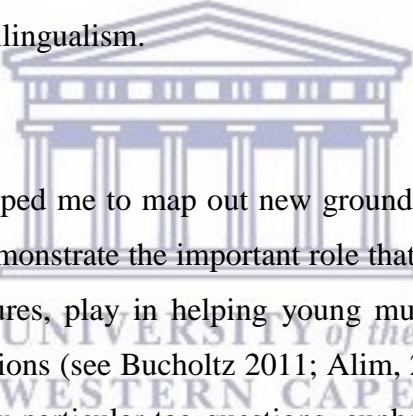
> At its core intersectionality theory asserts that both our own, inner understandings of self and the kind of access, opportunities and treatment we receive are product[s] of multiple and intersecting system of social classification.

Theorists exploring the notion of intersectionality have an interest in how structural forms of oppression work together to create unique forms of marginalization. In her work on social injustices, Crenshaw (1989) states that intersectionality shows how "black women experience discrimination… [not only] based on [their] race and gender but as specific instantiation of an irreducible intersection of the two categories together" (cited in Levon, 2015:297). In other words, as isolated categories, 'women' and 'racial' discrimination are not representative of racialized gender discrimination. There is a unique way black women experience oppression from 'black' men and white 'gender'. Since its inception, the work on intersectionality critiques isolation by highlighting the unique ways in which institutionalized forms of gender and racial inequality work together to create distinctive ways in which people experience oppression. In fact, these distinctive ways of oppression become vehicles to oppress minority groups further by interlocking social categories.

The significance of this notion for this study is that I attempt to demonstrate how discourses of disability are co-produced with discourses of identities and youth multilingual interactions. To study the intersectional discourses of disability is to analyze how young men and women, both abled and disabled, speak about disability (or not speak about disability). By critically exploring the language practices of these young people, I will be able to describe disability as it is stylized and enregistered.

Looking at how young multilingual speakers talk about disability does not only acquire us to look at what is said but in fact also to look at what is not said. It is in the analysis of what is not said that we find how speakers position themselves against their assigned identities. One way of exploring this is through the lens of the absent presence (Kulick, 2005).The absent presence is a useful notion to analyse how young multilingual speakers tend to use their words carefully when it comes to talking about sensitive topics such as disability.

Pointing to these absent presence will allow for further exploration of the power dynamics of youth interactions and how language and multilingualism is used to negotiate one's disability and so doing, will highlight disability as social problem as opposed to a medical condition. In this thesis then, I draw heavily on the research of Williams as I discuss the collected interactional and interview data in order to present an intersectional approach to study the discourse of disability. With this, I aim to contribute to the social approach of multilingualism (see Heller, 2007) and youth multilingualism studies, by investigating the intersectional practices of disability and multilingualism.

The work by Heller (2007) helped me to map out new grounds for studies on disability and language, as I will critically demonstrate the important role that particular words and phrases, as well as grammatical structures, play in helping young multilingual speakers talk about disability during social interactions (see Bucholtz 2011; Alim, 2004, and McCormick, 2002). In this study, I focused on how particular tag questions, euphemisms and metaphors enable young people with disabilities to construct a discourse of disability.

To study and examine the interactions of young disabled multilingual speakers is to recognize that disability challenges the borders of identity, as disability is based on shifting identity practices that fluctuate much like one's race or gender. Disability, however, is a little more complex than simply stylizing one's speech to project a disabled identity, although this can be done and is being done by many multilingual speakers, often to imitate disabled 'sounds' for comic affect. Disability is constructed by the way multilingual speakers 'do' language or stylize language to talk about disability and other types of identity. In order to analyze how young people stylize the discourse of disability, it is important to pay close attention to the semiotic features used by young disabled multilingual speakers every day in a context shaped by

disability. Therefore, in this project, I will use the notion of *stylization* to explore how young people with disabilities engage in disability discourses.

In this thesis, I argue that the analysis of micro-linguistic features allows one to reveal deeply intersectional discourses of disability. This thesis thus aims to (1) examine how young multilingual speakers at *Bubbles High* reflect critically on disability; (2) highlight how the young multilingual students interact with each other and also talk about disability during normal school hours at Bubbles High; and (3) develop scholarship on youth multilingualism, as proposed by Williams (2016).

1.6 Chapter outline

In the next chapter, *Chapter 2 A Sociolinguistics of Disability: Literature Review and Framework.* I explore current research on disability and multilingualism. In the second part of this chapter we will go on to discuss the notions used to analyze the collected interactional data.

In Chapter 3, *Designing Ethnography Research: Collecting Interactional Data in a Familiar Disable Space,* I explore the research design of this study by discussing the methodology. Chapter 3 will illustrate how the methodology helped me to achieve the aims and objectives set out in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 will also deal with my position in the field and how it influenced the interactional data collected, as I offer a personal reflection of my time and troubles I had in the field.

Chapter 4, *the Enregistering an absent present of disability* will provide an analysis of how the students at *Bubbles High* school talk and do not talk about disability during everyday interactions.

Chapter 5, *You are what you eat: Embodied Intersectionality, Language and the Emotions of Consuming Food and Medication* will analyze the language and multilingual practices of young disabled people at Bubbles High. This chapter will place special focus on the

intersectional practices of language and disability and the role food plays in shaping the discourses of disability.

Chapter 6, *A note on the future of sociolinguistics and disability studies*, concludes the study. It will answer the proposed questions, followed by recommendations, as I set the scene for future studies on language and disability in the South.

Chapter 2

A Sociolinguistics of Disability: Literature Review and Framework

2.0 Introduction

Much of what has been written about disability within the discipline of sociolinguistics has been within the subfield of (critical) discourse analysis. There are almost no studies in sociolinguistics to date that look at the interaction of discourses of disability, language, agency and voice in the global South (see Alzidjaly, 2015; Grech and Soldatic, 2016). Such a dearth has had a significant impact on how we study language use and multilingualism among young disabled speakers, and even more so, how we conceptualize young disabled multilingual speakers. Today, there is a need to deconstruct disability, not as vulnerability (in the way we traditionally understand vulnerability), but as ethical communication and meaning making practices and to think carefully through the implications for the agency and the voice of disabled people in neoliberal societies such as South Africa (cf. Puar, 2017). To do so, I argue we must, firstly, revisit the field of disability from the north to the south (in its discipline form and symbolic relation). Secondly, and more precisely, we need to look at discourses of disability to clearly map the way forward, in order to focus on the communication and multilingual practices of young disabled people. Thirdly, to help us make this shift, we also need to explore current studies of multilingualism as we attempt to bring disability studies up-to-date with current trends within sociolinguistics.

In this chapter, I will discuss the discipline of disabilities studies as I attempt to argue towards a sociolinguistics of disability. I begin by defining discourse of disability. I will then move on to look at the history of disability studies in order to set up the tone for the section on our discussion that reviews current research conducted within sociolinguistics studies of disability. In section 2.2.1, I will pay special attention to work carried out within the subfield of discourse analysis and interactional sociolinguistics. Section 2.3 builds upon the previous section where I discussed disability studies from the North to the South. Thereafter, we go on to discuss the importance of a Southern perspective to disability studies. After reviewing the current landscape of disability studies, we move on to talk about the conceptual framework that will provide the theoretical anchor to argue for a move towards a sociolinguistics of disability.

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2.1 Discourse as a way of Speaking

As a starting point to the endeavour outlined above, we will first need to briefly unpack the notion of discourse. It is important to note that when I use the term discourse in this study, I refer to common-sensical spoken and written constructs that form around a particular topic and result in socio-cultural systems of belief or, what Fairclough (1992) calls, *orders of discourse*.

Cameron (2001) defines discourse as language-in-use, which is concerned with how language is used to achieve particular goals. Language-in-use focuses on how language is used by people to perform particular tasks. It looks at the purpose of language and how speakers use it to attain certain objectives. This description of discourse also recognizes that context is critical, as "it is difficult to understand what a piece of language means without referring to the social context" (Jones, 2012: 37). In other words, in order to understand the communicative message, one must understand the situation in which it is said. For Cameron (2001) then, discourse is about what is said, what the purpose is of what is said, how what is said is said, and the contexts in which it is said. Jones (2012) adds that discourse analysis is a subfield of linguistics that looks at different aspects of language, and has proven particularly useful as an analytical tool. Discourses of disability then, understood in this study, are the way we talk and write about disability, and that includes natural conversations, interactions and representations of disability within a social framework of vulnerability.

In what follows, I will argue that we need to shift our focus to a more interactional sociolinguistic approach to study disability. In an attempt to make this shift, I will explore the history of disability together with current work on disability.

2.2 A Brief History of Disability Studies

Pioneering studies on disability in medical journals demonstrate how discourses of disability are often shaped around stigmas of "defect, disease and injury" (see Sibers, 2008: 3) and this has in turn shaped social stereotypes of disabled people as vulnerable human beings (Kulick and Rydström, 2015). Increasingly, however, there are calls by disability theorists and social scientists to re-theorize discourses of disability not as a medical construct alone, but as a

socially situated phenomenon to highlight the agency and voice of disabled people (see Bantjes, Swartz, Conchar and Derman, 2015). Social approaches to disability have attempted to develop social models of disability to do the latter. Owens (2015: 387), for instance, points out that "the social models of disability has demonstrated success for disabled people in society by challenging discrimin[atory] understandings of disability." Disability is thus not a natural feature, but rather - like many other forms of identity - a social construct, that is subject to creeping medical stigmas.

Striker (1982), who many consider to be one of the founding fathers of disability studies, made a case for the importance of disability, in that disability provides the lens to rethink other categories of human identity, such as race and gender, to name a few. Years later, Mitchell and Sharon (1997: 21) made a similar point when they argue that "stigmatized social positions founded upon gender, class, nationality and race have often relied upon disability to visually underscore the devaluation of marginal communities." In other words, disability enables social theorists to problematize the epistemologies that tie social constructs to biological categories of gender and race. This is significant because social and linguistic models of disability have often attempted to reconstruct disability to highlight the problems of agency and voice for people with disabilities (see Ramanathan, 2009). We will return to this point in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

2.2.1 Disability and Sociolinguistics

Disability studies is an interdisciplinary field that has been useful in studying the sociolinguistic and sociocultural dynamics and practices of disabled people across the world. According to Grue (2011: 535), "the roots of disability studies can be found in mid-century sociology in the work of Goffman and Zola somewhat later in history [in the work of] Striker". Following Goffman, Striker (1982) and Zola (1982) have been key in the production of pioneering texts that in many ways bridged the gap between disability and culture, providing the tools to scrutinize the structures and 'frames' that shaped disability, particularly in understanding personal narratives to describe first-hand accounts of what it is like to experience life with a disability.

Disability studies in the social sciences is slowly catching up (theoretically and methodologically) to current research trends as we observe rapid global and local transformative changes in the field. Across the humanities and social science disciplines, there have been different levels of development with regards to enquiries into disability. Sociolinguistics, and more particularly, discourse analysis, is one of the (sub-)disciplines that have grown experientially. Since the establishment of sociolinguistics as a recognized academic discipline in the early 1960s, discourse analysis has been at the heart of many studies on disability. According to Jones (2011) Fulcher's (1989) seminal work on the discourse of disability, in particular, discusses some of the main disability discourses. Citing Fulcher (1989), Jones (2011) identifies four key discourses of disability: (1) the *medical* discourse, which is the oldest and can be traced back to early westernized conceptualizations of disability as a concern for medical journals and experts; (2) the *charity* discourse, an ethical and social take on disability. This discourse shares similar ideologies about disability with the medical discourse in that it also represents people with disabilities as highly vulnerable people who need help from others to function affectively; (3) the *lay* discourse which dominates media and film enterprises as it represents people with disabilities as 'freakishly incompetent childlike human beings', in other words, that discourse dehumanizes the disabled person; and (4) the *rights* discourse, as Jones (2011: 277) points out, which "sharply *contrasts* with the three discourses [above]… and portrays people with disabilities as individuals with civil rights of access and equity". Many disability scholars and discourse analysts like Fulcher (1989) and Jones (2011) have been concerned with how people with disabilities are positioned and how they use language to position themselves. Studies conducted on disability over the last few years have lead the way towards tackling these entangled discourses of disability (See Shakespeare, 2018, for a coherent example). More recently, disability studies scholars continue to illustrate how personal narrative can be a useful tool, not only to elicit talk about their disabilities from disabled speakers (see Cochrance, 2014), but also as a way to pinpoint the agency and voice of disabled speakers.

This project looks to expand the methodological approach of storytelling by analysing how young disabled multilinguals use language during interactions in order to recapture agency and voice. However, in order to better understand this methodological shift, we first need to trace the historical trajectory of how narratives came to be a useful methodological tool in disability studies.

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In 1982, Irving Zola's personal narrative in *Missing Pieces* revived narrative as a useful tool to help other disability scholars to shape their own narratives. Over the last few decades, we have seen many scholars within disability studies draw on their own personal experiences of disability not only as enquiry for the field of medicine but also as a social phenomenon. For example, Shakespeare provides a powerful description for us to understand what it is like to live as a disabled person. He writes:
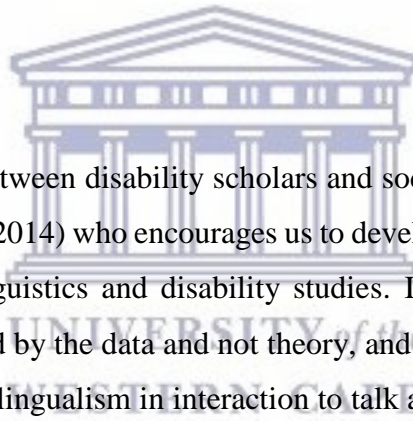
> *People have asked me 'when did you first realise you were disabled?' You are reminded of your difference when you come through the door and the stranger jumps out of their skin because they were not expecting someone disabled you are reminded of your difference every time a group of children start[s] laughing at you* (Shakespeare, 2017: 54).

Many disabled people with disabilities share similar stories about becoming and realizing their disabilities (myself included) through people's laughter, notwithstanding the material landscape and building infrastructure that make us feel more disabled as we struggle to move around in society. Shakespeare calls the latter *disabilization* (becoming disabled). For him, it is "not… a sudden change of status. But rather [a] continual process…of changing, of identifying and not identifying" as a disabled person (Shakespeare, 2017:55). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, a disabled feminist scholar, describes the process of becoming disabled in a similar way. She says that "[one is] not born into disability but enter into it as we travel through life, we don't get acculturated the way most of us do in our race or gender. Yet disability, like any challenge or limitation, is fundamental to being human — a part of every life" (Garland-Thomson, 2016). These reflections only capture some of the complexities of disability and clearly demonstrate that, although we are 'born differently' and our bodies and capabilities 'may change' through life, the process of disabilization is a process of socialization influenced by discourses of disability. Talk about one's disability through personal narratives has proven successful and generated an interesting way of exploring disability in the academia because, as a methodological tool, in my opinion, it continues to be one of the best ways for disability researchers to achieve the new critical research agenda. According to Alzidjaly (2015:7), a critical research agenda "encourages a bottom-up [instead of] a top-down research… [approach, as] findings are generated from personal experience, not theory". At this time, it worth noting that this project is not about narratives and disability, but rather expands

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on the narrative approach and looks to investigate the interactions amongst disabled people. This study therefore aims to understand how young disabled multilingual speakers use language to demonstrate a sense of agency and voice. In order to achieve this goal this study was thus guided by the above research agenda.

To show how this study followed this research approach, in the next chapter, I talk about my own experiences of interacting with other young disabled people as I discuss what it was like to be a disabled ethnographer doing research on young people with disabilities. To add to this, I begin the next chapter by presenting a little vignette from my time in the field and with it I hope to illustrate how conducting ethnographic fieldwork helped me to develop my conceptual framework. This idea was inspired by the work of intersectional sociologist, Naijma Alzidjaly (2015). In the beginning of her book, Alizidjaly provides a detailed transcript of a typical everyday interaction with her research participant, Yahya, a 46-year-old man with quadriplegia. Looking closely at the chain of events between Yahya and his assistants, Alzidjaly brought attention to Yahya's desire to be addressed directly and the need for him to speak for himself. In doing so, Alzidjaly (2015) firstly demonstrated how Yahya interactively achieved a sense of agency. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, she presents her methodological problem of how to address Yahya's agency. Building her study from the ground up further helped her to decide which theoretical concepts would best illuminate the data in an attempt to flesh out how Yahya used language to achieve agency in interactions. Alzidjaly's (2015) study expands on an approach to disability studies that aims to look at the everyday practices of people with disabilities. In particular, her study aims to highlight the importance of globalization, and how the rise of technology provides new affordances for people with disabilities to rediscover a sense of voice. While doing so, she draws attention to semiotics and how the affordance of pictures, music and especially Microsoft programs can be used to speak about one's disability from a personal point of view. Alzidjaly brings into focus the importance of exploring real-life interactions with disabled people to highlight their sense of agency. Alzidjaly builds on Hamilton's (1994) groundbreaking study, *Conversations with Alzheimer's patients*, the first book length sociolinguistic study to examine the language practices of an elderly female with Alzheimer's from an interactional perspective.

Alongside Hamilton's work, disability scholars like Grue (2015) and Kang (2009) have recently turned their focus to text and talk. Alzidjaly argues that together they investigate how disability is constructed through language use. Alzidjaly also credits these scholars above with opening up new avenues to re-examine intersectional relationships of power and bringing into focus "how the verbal or textual language [is] used for description of or discussion with people with disabilit[ies] can create or alleviate disability" (Alzidjaly, 2015: 10). Furthermore, it is also these disability scholars who point out that disability has for a long time been, and is being, constructed discursively. A central concern of this project is to build upon the work of Grue (2015) and Kang (2009) and demonstrate how people with different abilities engage with disability discourses through multilingual strategies as a way to reclaim a sense of agency and voice in interaction (see the work of Hamilton, 2005; Alzidjaly 2007, 2009, and 2015). This is because there is still no recognized dialogue in disability studies or sociolinguistic studies about the communication and meaning making practices and interactions of disabled multilingual speakers.

To develop such a dialogue between disability scholars and sociolinguists, we need to follow Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2014) who encourages us to develop methodological approaches that would suit both sociolinguistics and disability studies. I will argue later that such an endeavour requires us to be led by the data and not theory, and to look at how young disabled people use language and multilingualism in interaction to talk about disability. As a backdrop to this, I take a quick detour to discuss disability studies in the global South.

2.3 A Southern perspective on Disability Studies

Writing almost over a decade ago, Grech (2009: 771) pointed out that "disability studies […] remains monopolized by Western theorists, focus[ing] on western industrialized settings and imbued with ideological theoretical cultural and historical assumptions." In the years since this claim was made, we have seen disability studies within the global South receive considerable traction. In fact, more recently we have seen the first handbook published on disability in the global South, edited by Grech and Soldatic (2016). The text brought together established disability scholars from the North such as Dan Goodley, but included significantly scholars from the South such as Leslie Swartz. The volume engages with current research interests in

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disability and contributes to the current debate on Decoloniality, which seeks to advance African scholarship on disability as it "challenge[s] the dominance of Eurocentric disability tenets and readings of history" (Grech and Soldatic, 2016: xiii). While the volume is a-state-of-the–art masterpiece and the first of its kind, the collection is "neither complete nor comprehensive [as] a broad complex and heterogeneous thematic such as disability in the global can perhaps never be" (Grech and Soldatic, 2016, p. xiii). Although a Southern perspective on disability will not answer all the questions we have about discourses of disability, it does start however a critical conversation as it takes issue with the way western bodies of thought have dominated and influenced our thinking of disability for many years. It challenges us to think and shape our thoughts around what it means to look at disability from a Southern point of view.

Arguing towards a Southern perspective of disability studies Meekosha (2011) stresses that we need to develop knowledge from the South. Citing the discipline of disability studies, Meekosha (2011: 678) argues that "the time is ripe for developing southern perspective on disability that challenge[s]… values and concepts of northern theory". Disability theorists specializing in this area of research, that is, decoloniality of disability, extend, in my opinion, the overall goal of disability studies, which is to rethink Northern theories of disability, theories that pay little to no concern to issues in the global south. This often results in a fundamental loss of voice for people with disability living in previously colonized countries and further leads to very limited access to any form of effective participation (Meekosha, 1997: 51). With a now recognized call for a rethink disability in South we see the emergences of more critical voices investigating concerns with disability in the south (for a suitable example see Grech and Soldatic, 2016). These developments are important as we see new Southern theories and methodologies emerging but also more importantly scholars now are also seeing disability as a topic of interdisciplinary research.

2.4. Disability studies in South Africa

At the helm of disability studies in South Africa is clinical psychologist Leslie Swartz. In his most recent text, Swartz (2018) engages with disability scholarship in Africa and highlights the need for disability research from the South. He states that "only recently…scholars [have]

begun to unpack the ways in which the oppression of those with marginalized bodies interact with other forms of global oppression" (Swartz, 2018: 120). Since early 2000, Swartz and others in various publications have aimed to contribute to developing the literature on South African disability studies. As an emerging area of research, current studies have concentrated on gender and agency (Lipenga, 2014), identity and trauma (Watermeyer and Swartz, 2016), and disability and performance (Swartz, Bantjies and Bissett, 2018).

Current work in South Africa has yet to critically discuss the everyday communication and meaning making practices and interactions of disabled multilingual speakers 20 years into a democracy where eleven are now recognized in the constitution. While I do consider the work of Swartz and others, this project not only explored how young disabled multilingual speakers use language and what implications it holds for discourses of disability, but also builds upon the current body of knowledge. In particular, another central concern of this project is to demonstrate how young people with 'marginalized bodies' being disabled that intersects with other forms of vulnerability.

Now that we have discussed disability in the academy from its earliest history right up until its position in the global South, in section 2.6 of this chapter (below), we shift our focus to the study of multilingualism. However, before we embark on a discussion of multilingualism, it is necessary to devote some space to the importance of vulnerability as we attempt a shift towards a sociolinguistics of disability.

2.5 Vulnerability and ethics for disability

Linking disability to other forms of vulnerability allows us to, as philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1998) says, address an ethical obligation from the view that we are all different. According to Kulick and Rydström (2015: 274), "Levinas argues that we are [all] obligated to others because they are different from us [and it is] from this position of difference [people] make demands that enmesh us in a relationship". We are different because we have a need to be unique; our style that makes us an individual is important in understanding a sense of one's self. Kulick and Rydström (2015: 274 -275) suggest that our style or "singularity emerges

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through the relations with others…. [and] since [one's] existence as a subject depends on [others] it also obligates them to [us]…Levinas insists that the objection is an ethical one". Levinas argues for an ethical obligation because the world, and more so, the process of globalization, requires us to interact with others.

It is well documented in sociolinguistics that the process of globalization, together with the rise of new forms of technology and the development of social media, has allowed for new discourses and language practices to form (Lee, 2017). This is because, social media provides new platforms for social interaction to take place. In terms disability and globalization, technology is often described as a 'tool' used to either escape or aid one's disability. Seymar and Lupton (2004: 294) suggest that the virtual space and specifically within the context of online gaming platforms, creates a space for people with disabilities and particular those with physical disability to (re)represent their bodies, as "the body is [re]represented by one's textual depiction[s]". The online space disabilizes one's disability by offering alternative affordances which allow people with disabilities to identify as disabled. Because of the process of globalization, these new channels of communication allow for new differences or vulnerabilities, within the Levinasian sense of the word, to arise during new interactional settings. In other words, as the world becomes more and more globalized, we are becoming more and more ethically obligated to others as we need to interact with others in order to understand their differences and vulnerabilities (Kulick and Rydström, 2015). For Kulick and Rydström "we are responsible for others because they are living beings who exist in our world and who therefore deserve to be accorded dignity and opportunity to flourish" (Kulick and Rydström, 2015: 277- 278).

While teasing out the new ways in which young disabled multilingual individuals express their differences or vulnerabilities, it is important to recognize that an interactional study concerned with voice and agency of young disabled multilingual speakers requires a high level of dignity. Such a study should not further marginalize young disabled people, but recognize that these are young people who interact with one another on a daily basis, discovering their own differences and vulnerabilities within a space shaped by disability. In the next section we shift our focus to the importance of multilingualism and youth multilingualism for disability studies.
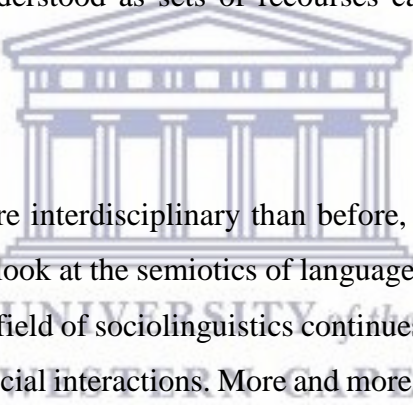
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2.6 Multilingualism and Youth Multilingualism

Monica Heller's seminal work on *Bilingualism: A Social Approach*, has been a key text to the development of multilingual studies. Besides shaping many critical arguments over the last decade (see Weber and Horner, 2012; Williams, 2017), Heller has made a critical contribution to the field as her work challenged the idea of structural-functional multilingualism. According to Heller (2007: 9), work on bilingualism/ multilingualism in the early 1950s approached it from the perspective of "different languages or language varieties [intersect] with different social functions". The structural-functional approach to multilingualism was based on the idea that language was a 'bounded system' (Heller, 2007: 11) meaning that a language was governed by a set of rules with a set of recognized assumptions. Heller cites Weinreich as one of the first scholars "to examine bilingualism… [as] related set of linguistic forms and social functions". Therefore, early studies on bi/multilingualism have had a significant impact on the way we conceptualize and investigate language, as "we have become complacent…[in] regard[s] [to]… the relative advantages or disadvantages of specific forms of bilingualism [multilingualism] for specific groups" (Williams, 2016: 112).

Multilingualism, from a structural-functional point of view then, takes a divided languages approach to how language functions in communication. Multilingualism has historically been viewed as multiple monolingualism(s) (Auer and Wei, 2007), as "previous social arrangements typically required only a particular additional language, language-related knowledge and/or a number of specific language skills for sustaining economic, political and religious systems" (Aronin and Singleton, 2008: 9, cited in Williams, 2016). The structural-functional history of multilingualism – an idea that today is kept alive in South Africa by creeping apartheid discourses – calls us to highlight, as I state above, that we are [all] obligated to others because of our *shared differences*. As we look to extend current interactional sociolinguistics studies on disability, vulnerability is one critical component that, in my opinion, must be considered, as it will help us bring disability in line with the current spectrum of work within sociolinguistics and multilingualism. It emphasizes the importance of ethics when studying people on the margins of society. Ethically, we must listen to what disabled people have to say in order to understand what their needs are, so that we can engage respectfully and not infringe on their agency. To such and end, we need to insert the idea of vulnerability into the contemporary trends of multilingualism studies.

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Nevertheless, at around the time a new focus to disability studies emerged, we also began to see a new social approach to multilingualism studies. According to Blommaert (2010: 102), multilingualism today is best understood as a "complex set of specific resources" as multilingual speakers tend to mix, blend and borrow different languages together as "language is social practice, [where] speakers [are seen as] social actors and boundaries as products of social action" (Heller, 2007: 1). As sociolinguistics argued for a social approach to multilingualism, Heller pointed out that:

> What emerges now is a sense of bilingualism [or multilingualism] as only one perceptive on a more complex set of practices which draw on linguistic resources which have been conventionally thought of as belonging to separate linguistic systems, because of our own dominant ideologies of language, but which may [be] more fruitfully understood as sets of recourses called into play by social actors.

Studies are now becoming more interdisciplinary than before, as many scholars researching multilingualism have begun to look at the semiotics of language (Weber and Horner, 2012). A growing body of interest in the field of sociolinguistics continues to focus on how speakers use language in performance and social interactions. More and more work today looks at youth and their use of linguistic features to display and inhabit particular identities (Alim, 2004, and Bucholtz, 2011). Many of the new developments that focus on youth, marginality, voice and identity have one common strand, namely, the intersectionality of identity (see Brooks, 2014; Mesthrie and Erest, 2013).

A central issue of concern for many sociolinguists today working with intersectionality and youth is to investigate the ways in which language intersects with other aspects of identity in interaction. Take for instance Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) study in which they argue for an "approach which views identity as social positioning" (Jones, 2017:57). Intersectionality, for Bucholtz and Hall, accounts for the way speakers display many different identities within different contexts. Intersectionality in this sense, I argue, must be extended to not only look at how speakers display many different identities in interactions, but also the way speakers talk

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about their experiences of being disabled in relation to their experiences of living within a particular social class, race and gender category. This extension in terms of disability and multilingualism studies will help to us understand how young disabled multilingual speakers express intersectional embodied experiences (see Chapter 5).

With all the above in mind, and in an effort to make a contribution to sociolinguistics and disabilities studies with this study, it is here where I revisit the notion of youth multilingualism, following the discussion in the introductory chapter. The notion of youth multilingualism (Williams, 2016) has used the category of youth to deconstruct the structural-functional approach to multilingualism to illustrate how young people are carving out new ways to communicate. Young multilingual speakers do multilingualism in a heteroglossic way as they move across linguistic markets by code-mixing, switching, shifting and stylizing language in the production of communication. Young people are disregarding 'standardized' language use and are constantly creating new ways to incorporate what they heard on the radio or saw on social media into everyday multilingual practices. What Williams (2016) highlights with this notion is the dynamics of multilingual communication practices by youth in decolonial South Africa (see further Williams, 2016). The notion of "youth multilingualism is the cover term for the dynamic and creative use of multilingualism by young multilingual speakers" (Williams, 2016, p.113). Youth multilingualism develops current scholarship on youth languages in Africa by demonstrating the importance of particular micro-linguistic features on youth identity within a racialized society that is South Africa. To such an end, youth multilingualism is a complex phenomenon that goes beyond language use. Sociolinguists are now recognizing that the way young people use and do multilingualism is representative of their social realities and conditions, as young multilingual practices provide us with insight into their thoughts of the youth and their understanding of our decolonial world. It describes how young people practise multilingualism as a way to demonstrate a sense of agency and voice.

Given the discussion on youth multilingualism, I now want to suggest that youth multilingualism provides us with one way to bring disability into the new realm of sociolinguistics and multilingualism. Furthermore, we are also able to see how styles, registers and social categories (such as gender and race) other semiotic features of language when used by these young speakers. It is my hope that this will push the discipline of sociolinguistics and

disability in a new direction as we work towards developing a new research avenue, or what I call 'a sociolinguistics of disability'[4] with a focus on the multilingual meaning making practices of young disabled people. In an effort to push the discipline in this direction, I build on the idea of orders of visibility, an idea put forward by Kerfoot and Hyltenstam (2017). For them orders of visibility is an enquiry that aims to make the invisible visible by "illuminat[ing] the shifting structures of power and asymmetrical relations of North and South". In this study, I aim to look at how discursive practices are used to make disability visible and perhaps, more importantly, invisible. In that we will not only see how disability is structured in the way we talk about it, but also it will help us to shift our focus to see disability as a social problem as opposed to just a medical condition. The focus on the communicative and meaning making practices further enables us to analyse the power dynamics and relations of disabled youth interactions. The examinations will reveal who is allowed to say what, and how what is said and not said is important for the way we talk and thereby construct the discourse of disability.
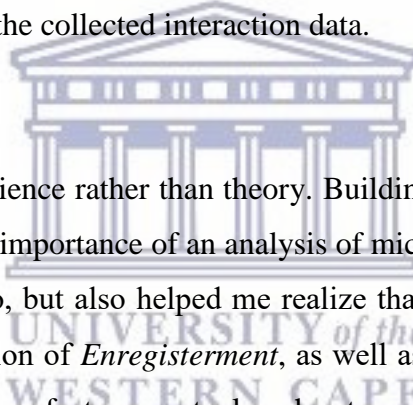
 The significance of such an investigation enables us to stress the importance of positionality and reflexivity, as it is in micro-linguistic interactions that we are able to see how language and multilingualism is used by young disabled speakers to reposition themselves so that they are agentive. It through the reflections told with interactions settings that we see how different discursive practice are used to negotiate one's disability. Central to these reflections is what Kulick calls the absent presences. The absent presence is how young disabled people discursively highlight their invisibility by illuminating their visibility. In other words, what renders these speakers not to be disabled, is by not saying what they are, but instead re-negotiating what they are not. This requires one to look beyond language and multilingualism, as it is not what is said that is important but rather what is not said that in fact reflects what we say. We pick this point up in chapter four and the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Now that we have engaged critically with literature on disability, we will discuss the core analytical concepts that will help us to explore and analyze the interactions and communicative meaning making practices of young disabled multilingual speakers in Chapters 4 and 5.

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[4] A sociolinguistics of disability refers to the way language shapes identity and discourses of disability, at the individual and community level, and in turn how disabled identity and discourses of disability shape language using the tools of linguistics to analyze such shaping.

2.7 Theoretical framework

Young disabled multilingual speakers use language in new ways to "display their voices" (Williams, 2017: 30) in spaces shaped by disability. To study this, I have drawn on the notions of *stylization* (Coupland, 2007) and *enregisterment* (Agha, 2007) to illustrate how this occurred in my study, that is, to illustrate how young disabled multilingual speakers stylize and further enregister the discourses of disability. These notions will offer valuable insight into the way multilingualism is used by the three selected young disabled female participants (described in more detail in chapter 3) and their peers to talk about a variety of topics, but most importantly for this project, disability. I locate my analysis of the communicative and meaning making practices of young disabled multilingual speakers in interaction within the social approach to multilingualism (Weber and Horner, 2012). This approach accounts for the way in which speakers use language and multilingualism is representative of the on-going social processes we see in our globalized world. Below we move on to discuss the core analytical concepts that will be used in the analysis of the collected interaction data.

This study was data and experience rather than theory. Building this project from the ground up did not only emphasize the importance of an analysis of micro-linguistic features, which is what this project intends to do, but also helped me realize that Coupland's (2007) notion of *stylization,* Agha's (2007) notion of *Enregisterment*, as well as Crenshaw's (1991) notion of *Intersectionality*, provided the perfect conceptual anchor to analyze the meaning making and communicative practices of young disabled multilingual speakers. Before we begin to discuss the notion of Intersectionality, a snapshot from an interaction taken from a conversation between Amy and her peer Ben is given below. This extract will demonstrate how disability and race discourses intersect. It points to how the social categories of disability and race are interwoven in youth discussions. The interaction I unpack below was recorded during the students' lunch break where they were seated in the tuckshop with no teacher present.

Extract 2.1

(Participants: Ben, Amy and Anne)

English Calibri; Kaaps **Berlin Sans FB Demi**

1. Ben: Oh the Russian not a Russian girl.

2. Amy: I'm checking huh. Maliekah is not Russian. She's coloured.

3. Anne: What happened to her? Riyaad said it's [got something to do with her] spine.

4. Amy: She got injections.

5. Ben: Needles in her back. She's disabled.

6. Anne: Why, what happened to her?

7. Ben: She's paralyzed on the one side.

8. Amy: **Yoh**

9. Anne: Is he talking nonsense?

10. Ben: Can't you see the way she walk? I'm not making fun.

11. Anne: Er that is your Girly.

The above interaction between Amy and her peers talk about disability as it relates to race. In turn 2, we see how Amy confirmed that the "girl" spoken of is not a Russian girl. But as Amy puts it, she is a 'coloured' (turn 2). As they continue to talk about this 'girl', we find out that she has recently become disabled as Anne tells us that "Riyaad said it's [got something to do with her] spine." Ben then tells everyone that she has "Needles in her back. [and that] She's disabled". What this extract shows is that this girl is now no longer experiencing life just as a "coloured girl", but is now spoken about as a "disabled coloured girl". In chapter 5, we go on to explore how Pam, another disabled coloured girl, talks about her embodied experience of being coloured and disabled.

2.7.1 Embodied Intersectionality

Before we explore the idea of Embodied Intersectionality, we first need to unpack the notion of intersectionality, over and above what was discussed in the Introduction chapter. Over the last two decades, intersectionality has broadened our understanding of the relationship between

language and the identity of disability (Levon, 2017). At first, when prominent disability scholar Lenard Davis wanted to explore the link between disability and other issues of identity, he was advised against it, and was told that disability studies were "not ready to dissolve disability identity" (Davis, 2013: 263). Davis believed that should his generation of disability scholars failed to recognize the current intellectual shift at the time their failure would be harmful to the field. He further realized that moving the discipline forward so that it could interact with global intellectual trends, would not be an easy task. This was because, in the early 1970s, Disability Studies was "the most recent identity group on the block…" and would therefore be "resistant to change or changing thoughts on identity" (Davis, 2013: 265). Despite this difficulty, Davis proceeded to explore the link between disability and other forms of identity. Davis made an important contribution to the field, arguing for what he called *dismodernist ethics,* that is, an ethical approach to identity that highlights, much like Levinas (1998), the importance of difference, as "difference is what all of us have in common" (Davis, 2013: 273). He thus does not only highlight the value of difference for studying identity, and in particular, the identity of disability, but brought attention to the importance of ethics for studying people with disabilities. He approaches his analysis from an ethical perspective and thus addresses the issues of agency and voice of disabled people, while at the same time demonstrating critical intersections of disability and other identities.
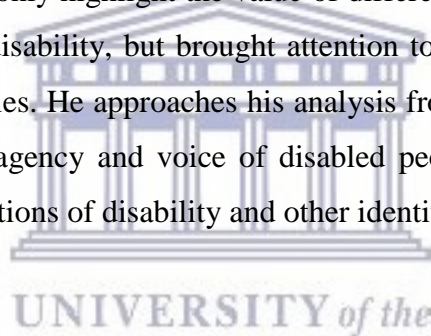
Despite the current work on intersectionality and disability in South Africa, disability scholars have yet to explore the intersectional embodied experience of being disabled in relation to other identities. Many of the current disability studies overlooks the lived experience of disabled people and focus on more on qualitative analysis. Take for example, the work of Sanheider, Mokomane and Graham (2016) exploring the intersectionality of poverty and disability. Sanheider *et al.* (2016: 368) concur that in South Africa the intended benefit of the disability grants, which is the alleviation of poverty, fails to take into account that "a disability grant recipient in a poor household will have less claim on the grant income for his or her individual needs than a recipient in a less poor household". In an attempt to contribute to African scholarship of disability studies, I build upon the work of these scholar cited above, and aim to look more at the intersectional embodied experiences of being disabled in relation to other social identities.

Thus, according to Safia Mirza (2013: 7) the idea of Embodied Intersectionality was developed by black critical feminist theorists as they looked to expand the approach to intersectionality. The notion "interrogates how … experience[s] [are] affectively mediated by the body". The notion of Embodied Intersectionality, added to my analytical toolkit, will help us understand how young disabled multilingual speakers use multilingualisms to express their embodied experience of being disabled as it relates to their experiences of being coloured and female. In chapter 5, I analyze how young multilingual speakers talk about their intersectional experiences of disability, race and gender.

2.7.2 Stylization: Putting the *style* in stylization

Before engaging with Coupland's (2007) notion of stylization, we need to first unpack the notion of *style* (if only briefly). Coupland (2007) suggests that style is about the ways in which speakers use distinct micro-linguistic features during interactions. It is about ways of talking and using the semiotic features of language in ways that make an individual unique. In Sociolinguistics, style originated in studies on variation and particularly in the work of renowned variationist William Labov. According to Alim (2004:14), Labov's interest in style developed out of a need to understand the stylistic variations of speakers. Labov gave the field variation "new life… [when] he develop[ed] a methodology sufficient to measure the extent of regularity in stylistic variation". Traditionally, studies on style then were an interest for many variation theorists as they focused on how speakers adapted their language to suit the current context. The analysis carried out by variationists at this time on the one hand presented them with evidence on the socio-economic class of the speaker as they linked different styles of speech with space and other social classifications. These scholars "were [thus] typically concerned with study[ing] dialects" (Williams 2017: 36). On the other hand, contemporary studies on style aim to "combine sociolinguistic and anthropological approaches" (Alim, 2004:16), which focus more on voice and agency. Key to this shift is in the work of Bakhtin (1981), which in fact provided Coupland (2007) with the theoretical ground to argue for work to be done on stylization.

To start our discussion on Stylization, I begin by presenting a one-minute interaction that took place between a group of students while watching the newly released *IT* movie (2017) by Andy

Muschietti. The aim here is to show how these notions will be applied in the analysis chapter to follow.

Extract 2. 2
Topic: A shared or individual practice: OUR language or your language?
(Participants: Pam, Jason, Mr Sam, Abby)

English: Calibri; Kaaps: **Berlin Sans FB Demi**

1. Bill: There's Tony ((laugh)) [referring to one of the characters on screen]
2. Tony: I'm not that guy I'm the guy with the glass (.) I'm Richie
3. James: No **bra** that's [
4. Tony:] You not funny **br:u**
5. ((Everyone talks over each other))
6. Bee: [we] said looks=
8. =Tony: I don't look anything like that fat **NAI** =
9. James: = **Nai** you do **br:u**
10. ((Everyone laughs))
11. Tony: Guys fuck no.
12. Bill: you swearing
13: No that's a good thing=
14: Bee: He keeps on forgetting he has that thing on
15: James: [No but that's a good thing its about youth language (.) its about OUR language
16: Kate: Your language maybe **ja**

In the above transcript we see that, as these students sat and watched the newly realised *IT* film, a typical youth interaction developed. This typical interaction begins with Tony's peers playfully joking with him about his appearance in relation to one of the characters on screen. This is evident when we see from lines 1-9 how Tony's peers attempt to draw similarities between Tony and the characters on screen. For example, in line 1, Bill says, "there's Tony". As Tony's peers proceeded to throw a few more friendly insults his way, Tony defends himself by telling his peers that "I don't look any like that Fat 'NAI'". After this response, the interaction seems to shift focus as the young multilingual speakers begin to talk more about Tony's choice of words.

From line 10 we see that James and Kate engage in a new friendly debate about the use of particular lexicons, in the above case, swear words. For James, swearing was a 'good thing' as it was a meaningful lexical resource and important in a youth multilingual register. On the other hand, for Kate, it is only an important part of James's style. The debate between Kate and

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James at this stage of the interaction was centred around whether swearing is a stylized practice of youth multilingualism or whether it is part of James' style of talking. The conflict that fuels this debate demonstrates ways in which styles of speaking are taken up within a particular space.

Aside from the the friendly debate of whether swearing is an enregistered practice or style of talking, the above transcript also clearly shows that these young multilingual speakers are demonstrating a style of multilingualism that is typical of young speakers from Cape Town. This is demonstrated in the continuous use of words **Nai, bra br:u**. This is an important observation to make because it sets the tone for the other analyzes to follow. It will be interesting to demonstrate how words, phrases and sentences, in relation to disability, are stylized by these speakers in order to display a sense of voice and agency. To track how these speakers are achieving a sense of agency and voice, we must focus on the how these speakers use different styles of language in order to assume a particular position.

Williams (2017) argues that stylization was developed out of critique of the traditional Labovian sense of style as it failed to account for identity construction (Bucholtz, 2011), and agency for multilingual speakers (Alim and Smitherman, 2014), and their multilingual performance (Rampton, 2006). With a focus on agency and voice, we see that the works cited here above are more concerned with how speakers move in and out of different languages, varieties and other semiotic features during performance and interaction. Stylization is the process in which speakers cross-linguistic markers and use different semiotic resources to represent their voice. In other words, it is the way in which speakers use others' 'words and voices' (Bakhtin, 1981), together with their own to project a particular identity. In line with the objectives of this study, the notion of stylization will help us investigate ways in which disabled young multilinguals talk about disability in interaction. In chapter 5, I will pay close attention to the styles of language at the phonological and lexical levels and describe how the discourse of disability and multilingualism is stylized in space shaped by disability.

Stylization is an important notion applied in this study as we explore how young multilingual speakers with disabilities use particular linguistic strategies to stylize the discourse of

disability. Furthermore, the notion of stylization will also help to analyze how young disabled multilinguals accomplish a sense of agency and voice in interactions.

2.7.3 Enregisterment

Aside from stylization, the concept of *enregisterment* will also be used to analyze how young multilingual speakers use multilingual resources to talk about disability. In order to understand the notion of enregisterment, we first need to understand the notion register.

Agha (2000: 216) defines register as "a linguistic repertoire that is associated, culture internally, with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices." It is a way of speaking that is articulated in particular spaces and a recognizable practice of a particular group. The register is produced or the result of "a number of indexical relationships" (Johnston, 2011: 660), as well as other semiotic features. When the micro-linguistic features are tied to a particular register, it becomes enregistered. Jørgensen and Møller suggested that time and space are important elements of enregisterment as "a given register must be necessarily be viewed as a frozen moment in on-going enregisterment" (Møller and Jørgensen, 2011: 103). In other words, the process of enregisterment takes place when a range of different mundane practices and different semiotic features become synonymous with the place they are practised in. Agha (2007:81) defines Enregisterment as "the process and practices whereby performable signs become recognized (and regrouped as belonging to distant), differentially valorised semiotic registers by population." Enregisterment is thus the process of providing social value to particular linguistic forms.

Taking into account, the notion of enregisterment as proposed by Agha (2007), will be applied in this study to (1) analyze how different linguistic features are tied to the research site, and (2) how the space therefore becomes an enregistered disabled space. In addition, by analysing the different registers, it will be interesting to see how these small changes impose and alter the discourses of disability.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have engaged with current disability and Multilingualism approaches, perspectives and interests. I have done so in order to argue towards 'a new sociolinguistics of disability', that is, a perspective on disability that looks at the communicative and meaning making practices of young disabled people in interactional settings. In line with this shift, we once again explored the important notion of Youth multilingual as we locate this study firmly within this emerging field. As I attempt to make a new contribution to youth multilingual studies, I also discussed the core analytical concepts of stylization and enregisterment that will help us highlight the ways in which young disabled multilingual speakers use language to display their voice.

In the next chapter, I will talk about my time in the field, as I focus on my position as a self-identifying disabled researcher doing ethnographic fieldwork on the youth multilingual practices of other disabled people. While doing so, I will also discuss the methodology employed in this study namely, ethnography and challenges I experienced while using it.
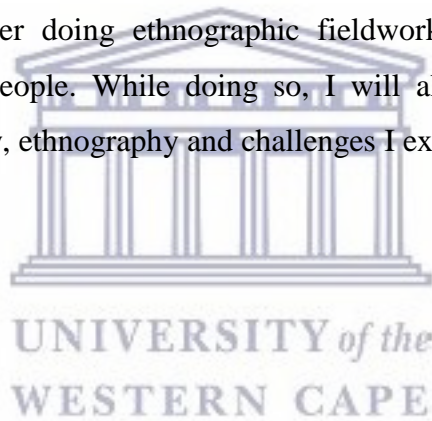
Chapter 3

Designing Ethnographic Research:

Collecting Interactional Data in a Familiar Disabled Space

3.0 Introduction

(Picture by Jason Richardson, 2017)

That is a picture of a rolling walker. It belongs to *"Leigh"* (not her real name), a young physically disabled female student at *Bubbles High* school. It was the end of the day, and like every day in the field, I was busy packing up all my audio equipment. Sitting on a bench on my last day of my fieldwork, Leigh walked down the ramp towards me. As she approached me, she said:

Extract 3.1

(**Participants: Pam, Jason, Mr Sam, Abby**)

English: Calibri; Kaaps: **Berlin Sans FB Demi**

1. Leigh: Jason why didn't you use me for your project?=
2. Jason: =I didn't know that you wanted to take part (.) but I will be back next year you can maybe take part then.
3. Leigh**: Ja** because it different us (referring to our physical disabilities) cause you must see **neh** I went to Spur the (.) uhm on Wednesday and this lady. She wanted me to sit down and she was like here's a seat sit and I was like no I'm fine thanks and so she like please (.) sit down but… ↑I WAS LIKE N:O. I'M. FINE↑. Thank you. So she just stared at me like I was weird.

This an example of a short interaction between Leigh and myself. Significantly, this interaction highlights a major methodological challenge that came with doing an ethnographic study on the language practices of young disabled multilingual speakers. In the above interaction, we see that Leigh felt that I not only failed to recognize her agency and voice, but also failed to recognize her willingness to participate in my project. For me, not choosing Leigh to participate in the study was because of the lack of interaction I had with her. The lack of interaction I had with Leigh only further contributed to her issues of agency and voice, as she wanted to be included. I, however, did not recognize her, and subsequently her agency and voice as I chose to ignore her. Reflecting on the above interaction helped me to also realized that not choosing Leigh was due to the issue of positionality. Because I inhabited a school where I was also once a student, it was apparent that my presence, coupled with my reputation as an ex-student, made it increasingly difficult for me to position myself, as I had to deal with these two conflicting identities. In my capacity as the researcher, I then chose not to ask Leigh to participate as I felt we share a common disability and within the few interactions we had this led to a discussion about my reputation as an ex-student, something I attempted to avoid in the field. As I further reflected on my time in the field, I was able to see that my two conflicting identities not only affected my interpretation of the data, but also the collection of it. I will discuss this further below.

In what follows, I will provide a detailed description of the importance of positionality when investigating interactions of young disabled people. In particular, in this chapter, I aim to

explain the research process for collecting interactional data as well as how I went about recruiting participants for this project. This research project comprised of three young disabled females from *Bubbles High School* in Cape Town, South Africa. The entire database collected for this project consists of five months of interactional data, approximately 90 hours of audio-recorded interactions, and interviews with three research participants. The audio recordings document how these young multilingual speakers went about their daily lives and spoke about food, schoolwork, sexuality, race and disability while at school. I chose to collect interactional data to see how these young multilinguals spoke about disability in a natural setting. I suspected that such settings would elicit conversations about disability in an authentic way. After I had collected all the interactional data, I replicated Alim's (2004) 'CONVERSATION' data collection method. This data collection method was developed by Alim in a study where he analyse the everyday language practices of young black American speakers. He developed this method in order to step a 'natural conversation' between his participants where the researcher (himself) was not present. Instead of doing a series of individual interviews, he felt a conversation with pre-planned conversational topics or what he terms a CONVERSATION, would better serve the data collection process. In this way, he was able to (1) generate a more natural conversation, and (2) maintain the interactional environment setting of his study.
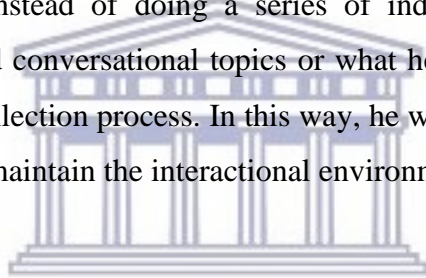
Inspired by this method, I invited the three participants to engage with one another without me, instead of having individual interviews. I felt that a CONVERSATION would stay true to the interactional data collection method. Before this CONVERSATION took place, I provided the participants with a list of questions that required narrative responses. The topics covered in this conversation were based on the audio-recorded data of particular interactions I felt were interesting and, more importantly, relevant to answering my research question. Thereafter, I transcribed different sections and analyzed each of them at different stages of this project.

I will start this chapter by talking about my position in the field and the challenge of being an insider/outsider. In section 3.1.1. I take a quick detour to discuss the history of *Bubbles High School* to provide more background on the site of the project. I will then focus on the semiotic landscape of the school. In section 3.1.2, I show how this space is semiotically as well as linguistically, designed as a disabled space. Section 3.13 is a continuation of the previous section where I discuss briefly my reason for selecting *Bubbles High* as my site of research.

Section 3.2 builds on the discussion in section 3.1 as I go on to explain how I navigated around the insider/outsider dimension by using inspiration as a method of engagement. In section 3.3, I will then discuss the importance of ethics when studying individuals with disabilities. I conclude this chapter in section 3.4 by bringing all previous sections together as I show that this study was ethnographic in design and how ethnography was best suited for this project.

In the next section, I begin with a discussion on my position in the ethnographic setting and my earliest assumptions as well as my realisations when I started my fieldwork.

3.1 In-/outsider

Being a young disabled ethnographer studying young people with disabilities, I at first considered myself a part of the group Goffman (1963) calls the 'own'. The 'own' group, for Goffman, is a group of people who all have the same stigma. In fact, as I mentioned briefly in the introductory chapter of this study, I once was a student at *Bubbles High School*. Before I entered *Bubbles High* to do my ethnographic fieldwork, I believed that being an ex-student would strengthen my position in the 'own' group. I thought being an ex-student provided me with a sense of currency to exchange easily with the students on their symbolic and linguistic markets, because I thought, not only did I share the stigma of being disabled, I also shared the experience of being educated at *Bubbles High* school. However, this was not the case.

I realised very quickly that *Bubbles High* was not the same place I remembered it to be. A lot had changed since I left. Reflecting on the time I was in the field, I have come to realize now that the reputation I developed as a good, hardworking student provided me with a platform to engage with the students as I attempted to build a rapport with them. However, before I expand on my time in the field, I will provide a brief history of the school in order to set the scene for what follows.

3.1.1 A brief History of *Bubbles High*

Researching the history of *Bubbles High* school for this project was not as easy I expected it to be. I was confronted with a number of hurdles as I set out to build my historical database. Firstly, many of the teachers, despite their best efforts, could not find evidence for many

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'factual folktales', that is, common ideas known about the school. Secondly, after not being able to find any evidence to substantiate the teachers' claims, I decided to use the internet. However, besides one PowerPoint presentation on Slideshare, I was unable to find anything useful. It was then that I decided to turn my attention to the National public library of South Africa. After I spent an entire Friday afternoon sifting through different documents, I discovered that the factual folktales' facts told to me by some of the teachers was supported by the annual schools' report. According the annual schools' report of 1968, *Bubbles High* was established in 1954 and was a school for children with Cerebral Palsy (CP). Roughly a decade after being formed, in 1968, the school changed its premises and felt that a name change was subsequently necessary, under the new name (the name that it still has today) *Bubbles High* set out to give "a new outlook for the handicapped" (pg, 13). A decade later, in 1989, *Bubbles High* opened their high school campus, which is the site of my study. It is important to note that as a result of apartheid laws, *Bubbles High* is a historically white school. Also as a result, the school today has the necessary infrastructure to cater for a range of disabilities, not only for learners with CP. This has given *Bubbles High* a reputation as one of the best special needs schools in the Western Cape. In fact, as previously stated at the start of this project, *Bubbles High* is home to a multi-racial population of 168 learners.
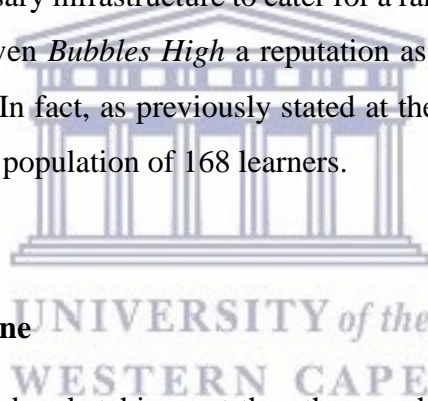
3.1.2 Setting the disabled scene

In this section, I set the scene by sketching out the ethnographic context. I begin by paying attention to the semiotic landscape. I do so in order to show how disability is practised and shaped within the physical setting. As I stated in chapter 1, the semiotic landscape of the school reveals that it is one that caters for learners with disabilities. For example, there are three entrances to the school grounds, all of which are wheelchair accessible. The side entrance, and the main entrance in particular, is where staff, students and visitors enter and exit the school grounds. As I walked into the school for the first time after five years, I noticed small changes to the landscape of the school. The first small change was the smooth layered tar that replaced the gravel stones that was once there. As a person with CP, it was refreshing to walk on ground that was retarred. On this newly (for me at least) tarred ground, I saw four familiar disabled parking symbols painted in bright yellow. As I made my way up the ramp and through the school, it seemed that nothing much had changed, until I came to the end of the corridor, or

what I knew once as the end of the corridors. Facing me as I turned, was a brand new section that had been built a few years after I left.

This section had a high ramp with iron railings on both sides. Beyond the ramp, I saw four new classrooms with an entrance and exit doorway coming from either side of the playground. This physical set-up was primed for students with physical disabilities. It would be understandable that the school's semiotic landscape would represent a disabled space, but it is through the semiotics of language that a disabled space can be constructed as a disabled space. According to Markus and Cameron (2002), buildings are not only made up of by physical material, but more importantly, also by the discourse that circulates between those that made the building and those that the buildings are made for. This dialogue shapes the environment itself and brings it into being (Baro, 2017). The newly constructed section at *Bubbles High,* and *Bubbles High* as a whole, then speaks for the particular school. It also shapes the discourse that circulates within it. In many ways, the landscape of the school does not only invite the topic of disability, but also helps shape the way in which it is spoken about. For instance, many of the posters and signages in the school, or lack thereof, demonstrates how young multilingual individuals engage with macro-discourses of disability. Take for example the following sign found at the entrance of the school (see figure 1).

Figure 1 - A recognisable sign of disability

This is a recognisable disabled sign often used to demarcate a disabled restroom or parking space. In many cases, when displayed in public spaces the sign does not require further

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explanation. That is to say, that the meaning is often embedded with the sign itself and does not need further explication. What is emblematic about this sign within this particular space is that it demonstrates how disability is spoken about. There is a causality between the sign and the way disabled students talk about disability in interaction, in the same way that the meaning of this sign is embedded within it. Disability too, as a spoken word, is often concealed through use of either a metaphor or euphemism. In other words, a common discourse of disability that circulates through the classrooms and corridors at *Bubbles High school* is one where students avoid the explicit mention of the word disability or naming of one's own disability. In chapter 4 below, I will go on to demonstrate how disability is more often spoken about through strategies of avoidance and indirectness as a way to talk about disability without making mention of it. Talking about disability in this way becomes clear when one takes into account that many of these students have been together at school for many years and have developed a particular style of talking about disability. Along with this particular style of talking about disability (I will discuss this further in the next chapter), the styles of language spoken by the students at *Bubbles High* demonstrates a style of youth multilingualism that is a mixture of English and Kaaps, and other language varieties. It is noteworthy to point out that *Bubbles High,* is first and foremost an educational space for young people with special needs. Because of this, we will see how this community not only carved out new and interesting ways to talk about disability naturally, but also how they talk about disability in order to recapture a sense of agency and voice.

3.1.3 Rationale for Exploring Discourses of Disability at *Bubbles High* school

In the initial stages of my study, I had already decided that I would invade, or (re)invade rather, *Bubbles High School.* My reputation about which I talk about in the next section gave me a well-established network with the school which made it easy for me to approach the necessary authorities and apply for permission to conduct research. In addition, by reflecting on my own experience of being an ex-student, I was aware of the different forms of languages, styles and registers of language which were used by the multi-racial student population. Thence, in order to understand how youth multilingualism and discourses of disability (see chapter 5) were being practised by young multilingual speakers, I felt that *Bubbles High* would be a suitable site for me to observe and document the ways in which young multilingual speakers use different forms of linguistic practices to talk about race, gender and disability while at school.

In what follows, I provide a detailed account of my position in the field. More specifically, I focus on how I used my inspirational reputation as a method of engagement to help me deal with the insider/outsider paradox.

3.2 Being shaped

I started my academic career at *Bubbles High* in 1997 and matriculated in 2012. As I mentioned above, during my time at *Bubbles,* I developed a good-boy reputation. 'Inspiring student' was the phrase many of the teachers used to describe me. So when I went back, I found it particularly difficult to position myself because of this reputation, as it made it difficult to connect with students. I did not know how to find what Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) call 'symbolic competence', the ability to adapt one's position and shape the interactional site in order to become an insider as opposed to an outsider. It was particularly challenging because I felt I constantly had to compete with a preconceived idea of me because the students were constantly reminded of this inspirational reputation. This reputation was documented and highlighted publicly in 2016, when a local newspaper reported on my academic success (see figure 2).

Figure 2 - The article about myself in the Cape Times

The article spoke about my academic success (I had just graduated that year) and disability. And it was also republished on a number of social media sites, most notably Facebook, where my disability became the focal point of many comments and shares.

Figures 3 and 4 – social media responses to the article

Being represented as an object of inspiration is well documented in disability studies. In her 2014 Ted Talk, *I'm not your Inspiration, Thank you very much,* late disability activist Stella Young popularized the term 'inspirational porn'. Grue (2014: 2), building upon Young's talks, described inspirational porn as "(a) an image of a person with visible signs of impairment who is (b) performing a physical activity, displaying signs of physical prowess, and is (c) accompanied by a caption that directs the viewer to be inspired by the image in question". Given that Grue built on the definition by Young, it is unsurprising that he describes inspirational porn in the above way. Unlike Grue, however, I do not feel that "all part of the definition are necessary" (Grue, 2014: 3). The way I was represented, in my opinion, can still be considered as inspirational porn even though the article above does not have all three elements of Grue's definition.

Each story represented in the media then is context specific, and is framed within the context the story is told. More specifically, when a person with a disability is represented as an object of inspiration, each representation is unique in a particular way. This means that inspirational porn is not necessarily an image of someone with a visible disability doing a task that requires them displaying an act of 'physical prowess', but inspirational porn instead is a way the media makes particular semiotic and linguistic choices to position the person with a disability as inspirational. Take for example the article about me. The image itself (figure 2) does not display an act of physical prowess. Instead, it demonstrates a joyful moment and works together with the text to shape the story as one of academic success, and uses my disability in order to frame the story further as inspirational porn. Moreover, by shaping my story as inspirational porn, the

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article shaped the discourse around it as many people on social media sites framed their responses to fit within the inspirational discourse (see figure 3 and 4).

This reputation accompanied me to the school and stayed with me throughout my time in the field. As I walked into the school one Friday morning, I did not realise just how significant my reputation would be. Consider the following two extracts taken from the school assembly on the last day of my fieldwork, where Teacher x spoke about what type of student I was at *Bubbles*.

Extract 3.2:

Participants: Teacher x and Jason

English: Calibri; Kaaps: **Berlin Sans FB Demi**

> 1. Teacher X: Many of you guys know have seen Jason, uhm Jason is a former student, his now at UWC and uhm he's done really well in his undergrad studies uhm and his currently busy with his Masters uhm [he was here] doing research for his master's degree uhm Jason uhm so Jason just **ganna** give us a brief synopsis of because today is Jason's last day and hopefully soon he will be submitting his thesis uhm So yeah Jason had an opportunity to go to the United States in grade 9

> 2. Jason: Eleven

> 3. Teacher x: 11 and in order to go to the United States it cost a lot of money when you there it cost a lot of money and you need to come back it cost a lot of money but at one point it seemed like it was going to happen but I think Jason along with Teacher A believed in what Gandhi said live to be the change (.) you have to be the change that you wanna see and the two of them along with teachers and former students uhm made it mission to raise the money and get Jason to the United States which was achieved and we hoped that was kinda the catalyst that would set Jason on to his journey

It was being shaped in this way that often made me feel like an outsider. I felt that my reputation was something that I needed to navigate around. Whenever one of the students wanted to hear 'my story', I told myself, "I am not here to talk about myself and the type of student I was". Instead, I went to *Bubbles High* to listen to how these young individuals talk about disability. It was for this reason that, in the beginning of my fieldwork, I felt my reputation was my biggest challenge, as I was constantly battling with the imaginative inspirational Jason who was presented to the students. It made me feel like an outsider, because it was the only topic that

most of the learners wanted to talk to me about. I assumed that I needed to change the narrative in order to become an insider. I had no idea of how I would change the narrative, but remembered telling myself "just go with it".

3.2.1 Inspiration as tool and site of engagement

As I decided to just 'go with it', I realized that, if my reputation was the main topic of discussion, I would need to use it as a way to build a rapport with the students and become an insider. As I did this, it became clear to me that what I thought was my biggest challenge in the field, my reputation, was in fact the tool that allowed me to navigate around the insider/outsider paradigm. For instance, talking about my past was a way to build a relationship with the students, as we chatted and compared teachers, the landscape of the school and significantly, what kind of students they are to what kind of student I was. This demonstrates how sharing experiences about *Bubbles High* was one of ways for me to become an insider. However, it was by sharing stories about my reputation in particular that provided me with a way to engage with the students and find my research participants.

I decided that before I approached any possible students to participate in my project, I would spend some time getting to know the students. It was approximately one month since I started doing intense participant observation before I approached Kat and Pam to take part in my project. It was only after I shared my story with their English class that I felt it was time to approach them together as they were always together (as many of their teachers explained) and as such I asked them to participate in my study. After I explained that they would have to wear a small microphone two days a week, they laughed but were happy to participate in my project. In addition, they were provided with all the relevant ethical clearance documents from the WCED and the University of the Western Cape (UWC), and I made it clear to Kat and Pam (1) what the project intended to do, and (2) what their roles would be in the project. I then asked them to discuss it with their parents and/or legal guardians, as the study required ethical consent from both the research participants and their legal guardians. The collection of audio-recorded data only began once all forms were signed and received. I will discuss the importance of ethics further below in section 3.3.

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It was about three weeks into the audio recording when a close friend of Pam's, 'Amy', asked Pam why she was wearing a microphone. As I watched how Pam explained that she was taking part in a study about talking about disability, Amy's reaction demonstrated that she was interested in the project. I decided that I would spend the next few days observing how Amy interacted with the other students. Once I felt that she would be a suitable candidate for the project, I started a conversation with her. As we spoke and shared our experiences of being students at *Bubbles*, we somehow ended up talking about my reputation. It was after this that I decided to ask Amy if she would be willing to take part in my project.

Inspiration then was a tool of engagement, as many of the conversations I had with the students was framed within the framework of inspiration. My reputation shaped the conversation and influenced the way I was spoken to by the students, how the teachers spoke about me to the students, and more importantly, how I engaged with the students. In other words, inspiration constructed me, as I was authored by teachers as well as social and print media. Being authored as inspirational in turn gave me the tools to position myself as an insider.

Inspiration was also a *site of engagement*. It is, according to Jones (2005: 143), site of engagement determined by our actions, trajectories and motion in space. Thus if it is our actions that determine future action as well as the way we recall past ones, then it is fair to say it was my earliest actions from when I was a student at *Bubbles High* that determined how people spoke about me. By using inspiration as a data collection tool, I then set in motion how the students would talk to me thereon forth. My actions were based on current circulating discourses that were shaped by past events and actions.

3.3 Ethical Challenge and the importance of Positionality

Given the discussion above on reflexivity and positionality [5] of my ethnographic self, in the next section, I want to highlight some of the ethical considerations that are important when conducting ethnographic research on disability.

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[5] These are two important concepts that help ethnographic researchers think back to how their presence impacts not only data collection but their participants.

Often when we think about ethical concerns in the social science fields, we tend to place emphasis on content forms as we outline issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Morrow and Richards (1996) point out, for example, consent forms will generally emphasize that (1) the identity of the participant must remain strictly confidential, and (2) as researchers, we must outline how we will follow strict procedures to keep the participants' identities safe. We take into consideration all of these factors as well as others in order to receive informed consent. Many researchers working in the social sciences stress that informed content is important, an often-overlooked aspect to informed consent in social studies, and even more so in disability studies in particular. The question arises as to how 'we' as researchers intend to maintain the human dignity of 'our' participants throughout the research process. Maintaining human dignity is important for disability studies because it helps us to understand an important challenge of positionality.

During my time in the field, I realized that maintaining human dignity begins from the moment we start interacting with the people we are studying up until writing up and representing their voices in a fair and honest manner. In order to uphold and maintain ethics in the field and beyond, it is important to question our roles as researchers. To do so requires the researcher to reflect upon his or her position. While doing research on young disabled people within a familiar space, I found that positionality is an important notion that must be considered in an attempt to maintain human dignity. This is because, as I will demonstrate in chapter 4 below, young disabled multilinguals tend to strategically position themselves against the medical model of disability as they go on to construct what I call *an absent presence of disability.* In particular, I found that my presence as the researcher and ex-student played a significant role in the way this discourse was constructed in interaction.

The importance of positionality is well documented in sociolinguistics. Writing about Hip Hop and multi-sited ethnography in Cape Town, South Africa, Williams (2017: 63) points out that "ethnographer[s] … need to become aware of the unavoidable presence of themselves". Williams goes on to quote Haglund (2005: 30-31), who suggests, "ethnographers must therefore recognize the implications of their own presence" and in doing so, we are able to ask, how did my action harm or benefit the people I studied? By questioning our roles and actions, it helps us to realize that, as researchers, we have an ethical responsibility to uphold and acquire informed consent. To this end, informed consent requires researchers to understand the complexities of positionality and remind ourselves that we are people studying people

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(Alderson and Goodey, 1996). For disability studies then, it is important that we understand that as researchers we cannot simply put 'people with disability in their place' (present them as test subjects), because any interaction we have with our participants will affect them in some way. It is worth noting that reflecting on your position is not the only way we can uphold informed consent. Instead, the process of reflexivity assists researchers to recall how he or she went about, to the best of their ability, to maintain human dignity. Returning to the vignette I presented at the beginning of this chapter we can now see just how reflexivity helped me to recognize, that although the interactions I had with Leigh was short and limited, it still had an effect on her agency and voice. As I reflected further, I was able to see that, in my position as 'the researcher' and as I attempted to uphold inform consent, by not talking to Leigh before I obtained ethical clearance I still made her feel excluded. This also went against what this study aimed to do, which is to highlight the agency and voice of young disabled multilingual speakers. By reflecting on my time in the field, I am mindful of the criticism of the 'observer's paradox' in that even although I did not interact that much with Leigh I still altered the nature of everyday events. In fact, the vignette shows just how we need to move beyond the observer's paradox and beginning to investigate how we use either inherited or created social capital in order to move from an outsider to an insider.

Before I conclude this chapter, I provide a brief profile of all three main participants. The purpose of these profiles is not to further marginalize each speaker or 'profile' them in any way. It is rather to describe the background information I gathered from each of them through observations, and the interactions I had with all of them. Aside from the three main participants below, I introduce many of their peers they interacted with. I decided not provide them with a linguistic biography, as they did not agree to part take in the study. In order to limit any 'profiling' and maintain the human dignity of the main participants, I followed Cochrane (2014) and used the words of the participants and the people they interacted with as far as possible.

"Pam"

Pam is a 17-year-old female in Grade 9 and had been at *Bubbles High* for two years at the time I started my fieldwork. She goes to *Bubbles*, because, in her words: "I needs help with Maths," but for Pam's teachers, she is a learner at *Bubbles High* because "they think I can't sit still they

think I have ADD". Aside from this, Pam loves to sing and despite everyone telling her that she talks a lot, she thinks she does not, especially when she takes her Ritalin.

"Kat"

Kat is Pam's best friend; she is the same age as Pam, and also in the same class as Pam. She has trouble with reading and writing. When I asked her why she goes to *Bubbles High?* , she told me, "I'm here for my English". When I transcribed all the interactional data for this study, I realized that Kat never spoke about her problem with English. It was only by talking to her via Whatssap, an online social media platform, that I noticed that she had trouble with decoding some of my messages and the spelling of some words. In terms of disabilities, due to her trouble with reading and writing, Kat could be classified as someone with dyslexia.

"Amy"

Amy is a close friend of Pam and Kat. She is 15 years old and also in grade 9. She is a self-proclaimed *'kos gangster'* (a street term for someone who loves to eat like a gangster). Amy is at *Bubbles High* because she failed grade 8 and had to repeat it at *Bubbles High*. She also finds it a challenge to sit still because of her ADD.

The recorded data shows us that all three young multilingual speakers use a style of youth multilingualism. In fact, these young individuals are carving out new ways of doing multilingualism, as they find different and unique ways to talk about youth life. All three young disabled multilinguals self-identity as coloureds living in working class communities and speak the marginalised variety of Afrikaans known as Kaaps. These are important elements one must bear in mind as we go on to the analysis of how these speakers talk about disability and how it intersects with gender and race in interaction.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I mapped how I went about collecting interactional data in a familiar disabled space. I also attempted to outline my position as a disabled ethnographer to show how I coped with the insider/outsider dilemma. This was followed by a discussion on the site for this project, namely *Bubbles High School*. In our discussion of *Bubbles High*, I attempted to set the scene in order to provide further contextual background. Building on the conversation we had on

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positionality, I spoke about ethics and the importance of recognizing one's position through the process of reflectivity. After this, I provided profiles of the three participants who participated in this study.

Now that we have discussed the methodological framework for this project, the next chapter will demonstrate how these young multilingual speakers stylized and enregistered their multilingualism(s) to talk about disability, race and gender during interactions.

Chapter 4

Enregistering an absent present of Disability

4.0 Introduction

In the beginning of chapter 3, I presented a vignette of an interaction that I had with 'Leigh' on my last day of doing fieldwork at *Bubbles High* School. In the interaction, we made two important observations: (1) the style of multilingualism that Leigh used in the interaction demonstrated a sense of youth multilingualism as defined in chapter 2, used in Cape Town, South Africa, and (2) it also showed how conversations about disability was commonly stylized in this space. In chapter 3, we also discussed how inspiration provided me with a tool of engagement. Although I did not realize it at the time, as pointed out above, it helped me to transition from an outsider to an insider. Soon after this happened, I was able to recruit participants and audio record their interactions. After about a month or so, I remembered feeling frustrated as I felt that disability was not being spoken about, and I could not hear it as I played back the recordings to do my transcriptions. One of the common themes that ran through the data, and more specifically the instances I will analyze below, was that students spoke about disability in a register that Don Kulick (2005: 615) calls *an absent presence*. According to Stroud (2016: 234), an absent presence is how the "'unsaid' of invisibility reflects the way visibility is articulated as an absence". In this chapter, I aim to analyze how the students at *Bubbles High* School enregister an *absent presence of disability* through the use of particular linguistic and multilingual strategies. An absent presence of disability refers to the way in which disability is made visible through communicative acts of invisibility. It is concerned with how multilingual speakers use language and multilingualism to reconstruct disability as invisible and in so doing restructure the way in which we talk about disability in interactions.

The analysis below will provide us with a detailed description of how young multilingual speakers go about talking about disability in interaction. I demonstrate how young students at *Bubbles High* school employ strategies of avoidance and indirectness, redirectness and rejection to enregister a discourse of disability that presents itself through absences. I argue below that the students at *Bubbles High* School reuse the words of the teachers to reconstruct the discourse of disability as an absent presence in order to represent themselves as agents. In

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what is to follow, I also demonstrate how the students' repertoires, particular words and phrases, more precisely, metaphors and euphemisms, are used to refer to disability during interactions. The intention here is to demonstrate how Pam (the main research participant) and her fellow peers at *Bubbles High* enregister a discourse of disability that avoids the explicit mention of disability.

To illustrate how an absent presence of disability is an enregistered practice, I draw inspiration from Kerfoot and Hyltenstam's (2017:7) edited volume on orders of visibility. For them, "Orders of visibility are the ways of knowing being and saying [are] concealed or embedded beneath the apparently… [linguistic]… practices". It is concerned with how linguistic forms of diversity intersect with different social structures. This volume explores how people engage in historical discourses. More specifically, the volume explores the ways in which these 'old' discourses together with 'new' discourses are intertwined and are remade, renewed, and more importantly, reflected in the meaning making practices of multilingual speakers. With this in mind, we will be able to see the ways the students construct and reconstruct the absent presence discourse. I aim to follow Kulick (2005:616) and explore "the not there, the unsaid trance, the absent presence that structure the said and the done". By describing Pam and her fellow peers as they carve out a space to stylize their speech to present their voices, we will be able to see how they reconfigure discourses of disability.

Now that we have briefly engaged with the ideas of orders of visibility, we can take a closer look at how young disabled multilingual speakers go about constructing an absent presence of disability. However, before we go on to describe how young disabled multilingual speakers stylize their language to enregister an absent presence of disability, it is important that we state from the outset that the interaction I present and analyze hereafter is an intimate interaction between young people with disabilities and myself, a disabled ethnographic researcher. Given that I myself have a disability, it helped me gain access to these interactions (see chapter 3 for further discussion). This is an important aspect to consider, because it will later help us to illuminate the significance of analysing everyday and mundane conversations of young disabled multilingual speakers.

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The data for this chapter was taken from a single event that I have chosen to present as a sequence of events in order to make it more digestible for the reader. The first sequence I present in section 4.1 is an example of a typical everyday interaction. In the analysis of section 4.1, we see how Pam stylizes her language to demonstrate a sense of their youth multilingualism. Here we will take a close look at how Pam used micro-linguistic features to stylize her youth multilingualism. In the second sequence we move on to analyze how Pam reuse the words of her teachers in an attempt to control the absent presence discourse of disability. This is followed by an analysis whereby Pam has momentary lapses during the interaction and reproduces the register she challenges in the previous sequence. In the last sequence we then move on to look at how Pam talk about her own disability and how she attempts to inhabit a position of a non-disabled person by deflecting her imposed disabled identity.

I begin this analysis with an example of a typical, everyday interaction between Pam and myself, with contributions from Abby and the teacher in the classroom. This interaction between Pam, Alan (a male classmate of Pam) and me began within a few minutes after they entered Pam's mathematics class. The conversation turns to an incident recalled by Pam that focuses on the abnormal behaviour of Kevin, a former classmate. The extract below 4.1 will help us set the scene for what is about to follow.
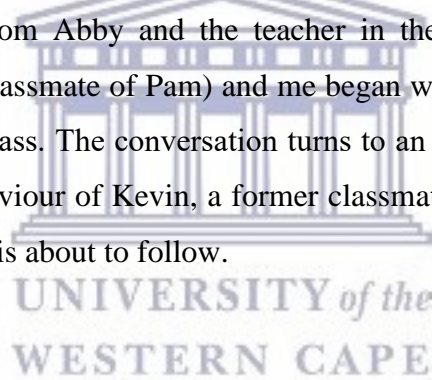
Extract 4.1: An everyday interaction

(Participants: Pam, Jason, Mr Sam, Abby)

English: Calibri; Kaaps: **Berlin Sans FB Demi**
1. Pam: uhm, there's a boy **neh**, he had orange hair Kevin
2. Jason: yes, yes.
3. Pam: he got angry cause they don't talk cause whenever we have free periods then they just play that game cause they hotspot each other and they play==
4. Jason: ==is he in your class?
5. Pam: not anymore he left, because he got frustrated with other class because the boys don't talk, the boys just play games and then he sits alone. So outside he was like, "you guys don't even talk I hate this class", and then he just left and they put him in a different class
6. Jason: when was this?
7. Pam: I think a few weeks ago==
8. Mr Sam: just send a message on the Whatsapp group that we **gonna** work next week with or without them.
9. Jason: uhm, so what happened?

10. Pam: he was just angry cause when they play they like in their phones you must see how they are if they have free periods like when the teacher goes out of class then they quickly play and then when the teacher come back then the just quick quick put it off, they too addicted to that game **I self get so**, /slf/ gɛt/ səʊ/ I just tell them stop that, talk to me=

In the beginning of the interaction, we can see that Pam initiates a conversation with me by introducing me to Kevin, the orange-haired boy. From the early stages of the conversation, Pam proceeds to tell me about how he became angry with his peers because, instead of talking to him, "they just play that cause they hotspot each other and they play" (turn 3). According to her, his frustration and subsequent expression of anger stemmed from an in-group game "hotspot" that he was excluded from. As the conversation continued, Pam expressed sadly that the exclusion of Kevin from the in-group by some in her classmates is reflective of how a lot of youth groups are formed to exclude and include their peers (turn 5). In an interesting way, she rationalizes that the reason why her peers did not talk to Kevin, and do not talk in a general sense or for conversation, is that they are addicted to playing games on their phones (turn 10), the root cause of Kevin's frustration.

During this interaction, Pam demonstrates a style of youth multilingualism that is typically spoken by young multilingual speakers in Cape Town. The first sign of her youth multilingualism is demonstrated in turn 1 when she makes use of a tag question, "neh". Pam goes on to demonstrate a style of youth multilingualism in turn 10 when she says "I self get so". The expression, "I self get so", and the tag question "neh" reveal just a few micro-linguistic features of Pam's youth multilingualism. Looking at the two features together, we can clearly see that Pam mixes the English and Afrikaans naturally while talking. In doing so, Pam is able display her type of youth multilingual practice. Further evidence of Pam's style of youth multilingual is evident when we look more closely at the micro-feature of sound patterns. When she expresses "I self get so" turn 10 her accent changes for a brief moment. Pam utters [self] as *slf* – phonologically, she shifts the central front vowel /ɛ/ to the back, therefore adding pressure to the sound in her pronunciation. This feature is typically found in the speech of young multilingual speakers who speak Kaaps as an additional language (Williams and Stroud, 2015).

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Aside from eliminating the /e/ in her articulation, she also performs a grammatical shift. Pam achieves this shift by expressing herself in English but conforms to the Afrikaans grammatical rules. The significance of this is in the way it helps to shed light on code switching which occurs in youth multilingual interactions. Although code switching at the grammatical level is not a common theme in the data or key focus, the data presented here speaks to the way particular languages, styles, registers and other semiotic resources are used in interactions by young multilingual speakers. The further significance of these two micro-linguistic features is that it is indexical and representative of Pam's youth multilingualism and that of her peers, which is a critical part of their local identity.

In chapter 5, we further analyze how Pam uses language to style her youth multilingualism. Another theme I will demonstrate in chapter 5 is the intersectional embodied experience of being disabled and the visceral feelings that emerge during interactions. Here we will look at how emotive words and multilingualism are used in order to stress an intersectional embodied experience of being disabled in relation to being a young female.

One of the observations we can make about the interaction above is that Pam goes on to describe how Kevin had a visceral reaction to the lack of interaction amongst the boys in her class. What is interesting about turn 10 is the way Pam uses multilingualism to emphasise her and Kevin's frustration with the lack of interaction. This is seen by how she performs a grammatical shift as argued above. The use of multilingualism in this case then further demonstrates the intersectional embodiment and the visceral feeling of frustration. In chapter 5 we will analyze in detail the intersectional embodied experience of being a female in relation to experience of the consumption of food and medication. We now shift our focus on to discuss how Pam enregister an absent presence of disability.

4.1 (Re) registering other words to (re)construct an absent presence of disability

As Pam completed her explanation of why Kevin proceeded to become angry (extract 4.1), Abby joined the conversational floor. As Abby walks towards Pam and myself, Pam repositions herself, moves from her chair and proceeds to sit on the table directly in front of me. Abby

positions herself behind Pam and begins to plait Pam's hair. Distracted by Abby, I attempt to keep Pam's attention by asking:

Extract 4.2.

Participants: (Pam, Jason, Abby)

English: Calibri; Kaaps: **Berlin Sans FB Demi**

Extract 2:

1   ((Abby walks over))

2: Jason: so whose class is he in now?

3. Abby: He is in ((says the name of the class)) now, he just got too angry

4. Abby: he punched Ms Mahsa door=

5. Pam: = Ja he punched her door=

6. Alan: = what?

7. Abby: he punched Ms Mahsa door=

8. Pam: what did you then think he did? He punched Ms Mahsas, what were you **ganna** do? What were you ganna go there's nothing can do.

9. Jason: but isn't that part of his condition

10. Pam: I don't know, but he was like that before but then he did come to school they just=

11. Abby: did you give my pen back yet?

12. Pam: no I didn't, they just said he was stressed but we know it **wasn't** stress he ate the foam that foam cup he ate a whole Styrofoam cup and he was like he was angry man he hit his head like that whole time and then we were like, we took it like a joke course we didn't see that he was really like that, we didn't know what was wrong and took it like a joke and that wasn't right of us to do it, I also feel sorry course we didn't do anything, we didn't like go tell the teachers his like acting strange course he did act strange he like has a problem with our class course like the boys will be rude with each other but then they like friends again, like now I asked him are you happy in your new class he was like yes I was like yoh that felt **a bitjie** bad but okay if his happy there his happy, there nothing else I can do but they are so I also get just so, ah I get angry with them, you can look at me. **Hou your man dop jy!**

18.   ((Pam looks at Alan))

In the previous transcription, we saw how Pam drew attention to the current situation in class (the boys playing games). In doing so, she carves a new space to talk about a past event that centres around Kevin and the way in which his behaviour was described by the teachers. In turns 3-8 above, Pam provides some contextual information as to where, when, and why Kevin acted out in this way. With the help of Abby, Pam slowly begins to retell the events that unfolded. In turn 10, Pam states that Kevin's 'abnormal' behaviour is a familiar occurrence as she goes on to state "he was like that before". After admitting that this was not the first time she witnessed Kevin's 'abnormal' behaviour, Pam is briefly interrupted by Abby when she asks "did you give my pen back?" (turn 11), to which Pam replies "No I didn't" (turn 12). Following this short interruption, Pam proceeds to recap the event which centres around Kevin. As Pam retells how the event unfolded, interestingly, Pam starts by recapping who said what, and how it was said as she highlights the words used by the teachers saying "they just said" (turn 12). In so doing, Pam goes on to place special emphasis on the words used by the teachers to talk about Kevin's actions, as she completes her thought by saying "[Kevin] was stressed" (turn 12). Pam then immediately rejects the teachers' description of Kevin's actions as she says "but we knew it **wasn't** stress" (turn 12). According to Pam, then, the teachers are trying to justify Kevin's behaviour by using "alternative euphemistic terminology [instead of undermin[ing] the stigma, [they] actually reinforce prejudice and social subornation" (Longmire, 1985: 432). In doing so, the teachers themselves insert an absent presence of disability into the interaction. It seems that by creating an absent presence of disability, the teachers attempt to steer away from stigmatizing him, as Kevin "the person is put before [his] disability" (Halmari, 2011: 829). Although the teacher may not have explicitly justified Kevin's behaviour or his disability and indeed "put him before it", it is still apparent that the choice of euphemism "stress" is underlined by disability. Pam and her peers recognize this, as she says we knew "it **wasn't** stress" (turn 12).

At this point of the interaction, we see Pam reuses the teachers' words in order to (re)describe Kevin's actions. In an attempt to re-describe Kevin's actions, we see that it is important for Pam to distance herself and her peers from what "they" (turn 12), the teachers, said. At the

discourse level of analysis, we see that Pam creates distance between the teachers' words and students as it allows her to reposition herself and by extension, her peers, away from a discourse of disability that takes away a sense of agency and voice from young people with disabilities. The distance that Pam creates between the teachers' words and the students therefore allows her to implicitly exercise a sense of power and agency as she repositions the students as the people with authority. This is demonstrated when she says "but we knew that it **wasn't** stress". In other words, Pam attempts to recapture agency for herself and the other students, as she rescripts the absent presence of discourse of disability introduced by the teachers.

Given that Pam is reporting on a previous interaction, we must bear in mind that the current interaction affords Pam with the space to (re)enregister the discourse. The new interaction thus allows her to recap events of the previous interaction in a register that is more representative of her voice as she is able to rescript events from here perspective. We also clearly see that during the interaction, Pam makes use of strategies of rejecting and distancing in order to establish a sense of control over the discourse. With this in mind, it is worth visiting the work of Joe Turner (2016) who suggests that escape can be seen as a method used to deconstruct social order.
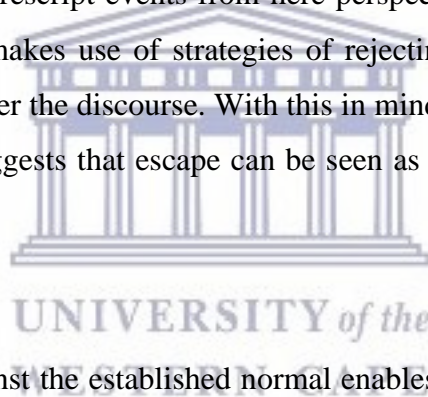
For Turner transgressing against the established normal enables people to achieve a sense of agency and voice. She cites Isin (2008) who suggest that 'acts of citizenship' allows people to escape a sense of oppression [or stigma] and enabled a sense of control as they demonstrate a sense voice through defiant actions. Turner (2016:114) goes on to say that "escape… is a refusal to align with the existing co-ordinates of contemporary order and representation". For Pam then, we see that she is attempting to unsettle the current discourse presented by the teachers ever so slightly, as she does not choose to outright challenge the discourse, but rather passively reject it. This of course is evident, as Pam does not make a clear alternative suggestion or justification for what 'stress' in fact refers to. Pam rather attempts to reshape the discourse as she tries to present herself and her fellows agentively in her retelling of the interaction between the teachers and Kevin.

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In more detail below, we see how Pam makes use of other metaphors and euphemisms as a way to reconstruct, reproduce and, most importantly, enregister the absent presence discourse of disability.

4.2 Further Enregistering the discourse

In Pam's attempt to rescript the absent presence discourse of disability, it is clear that she also contributes to the enregisterment of the absent presence discourse. In the final line of the transcription above, we see that she herself has a momentary lapse in rescripting the discourse. In turn 12, we see one such slippage, when she suggests that Kevin was "angry man". Here, Pam seems to be talking above disability, as she uses 'angry' as a metaphor for Kevin's disability, much like the teachers did previously. Pam then goes on to describe how Kevin acted, saying that he proceeded to hit his head […] the whole time" (turn 12). This is followed by how she and her other classmates reacted to it, saying "we took it like a joke we cause we see he really like that, we didn't know what was wrong with him" (turn 12). As the second sequence of this interaction comes to the end, we see that Pam contradicts herself. She not only has a momentary lapse as she reproduces the absent presence of disability as shown above, we also see how she no longer repositions the students and herself as authority as she states "they didn't know what was wrong" (turn 12). The last momentary lapse in this section we see is when Pam suggests again that Kevin was "acting strange" (turn 12). It is in these momentary lapses within the interaction that we see how Pam, rather than re-enregistering the absent present discourse of disability, she further enregisters it as she practises particular strategies of avoidance and redirectness. By making use of particular emotive metaphors and euphemisms in place of disability, much like the teacher did in the previous transcript, we see that these strategies of avoidance and indirectness are becoming allied with the register in which to talk about disability in interaction. So, while we receive no confirmation of what stress, angry or strange refers to, what we can see is that Pam and the teachers use particular avoidance, indirectness and rejection features to enregister an absent presence of disability. Evidently, Pam as well as the teachers are talking about disability in a way that involves not talking about it, a register I have called an absent presence of disability.

Shakespeare's (2018: 2) work reminds us that, for many generations, there has been anxieties about "what do we call disabled people?" The above extract demonstrates how these anxieties play out in interaction and further shows that, within this particular disabled space, there is a common practice that involves not naming or explicitly mentioning disability, but rather describing one's disability through a use of either a metaphor or euphemism. The absent presence of disability is therefore stylized in interaction and is an enregistered practice allied with the ethics of how to talk about disability with this disabled space. In other words, what is enregistered within this disabled space at the discursive level, on the one hand, is how not to talk about disability and not personalize one's disability through the use of particular metaphors in order to articulate disability. At a micro-linguistic level, on the other hand, the extract above provides evidence that indirectness and avoidance are ways for the students to engage with the discourses of disability.

So, why are metaphors used to refer to disability during social interaction? In the examples shown above, there are different reasons as to why this is the case. For the teachers, it seems that making use of metaphors and euphemisms in place of disability is underlined by an ethical obligation. By ethical obligation I mean the responsibility that the teachers have as, educators to see Kevin more than a disabled student. This is an important modality for all teachers to consider when talking about their students, especially when talking about a student to other students. Talking about Kevin in the register of an absent presence of disability then allows the teachers to fulfil this object. However, given that teachers are speaking from an ablest position we see that by talking about Kevin in this way minimizes his agency and voice.

For Pam, making use of metaphors as substitute for disability is a little more complex and driven by more than an ethical obligation. As discussed above, despite a few momentary lapses where Pam herself reproduces and contributes to the enregisterment of an absent presence discourse of disability, Pam engages with the discourse in a similar register as she attempts to (re)enregister it by rescripting the way Kevin is described and in order to give him a sense of agency and voice. Pam is able for the most part to engage in the register of the absent presence of disability without infringing on Kevin's voice as she talks from a disabled perspective. It is noteworthy to point out that this interaction is also a peer to peer interaction in that Pam is talking to me as a fellow young person with disability. So when Pam reproduces the absent

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presence of disability, for the most part, it does not have the same negative effect on Kevin's agency and voice as when the Teachers talk about him. This links to the broader social discourse of "nothing about us without us" (Shakespeare, 2018: 160).

To summarize the analysis thus far, Pam's interaction with me demonstrates how young multilingual speakers with disabilities use a style of multilingualism that is indexical and representative of a youth multilingual practice particularly used in Cape Town, South Africa. In the next chapter, we continue to analyze the style of multilingualism that Pam and her peers use when talking about disability and various other topics during social interactions, with a special focus on food. Importantly for this chapter, the interaction analyzed above demonstrates how young multilingual speakers reflect on language use and how particular words and phrases are used to engage with disability. It is clear that given the focus on her fellow peers' disability, she is aware of how to talk about it ethically, particularly within this space. It is also clear how language is used to enregister a discourse of disability that presents itself through absence. The significance of this analysis is that it sheds light on intersectional practices of language and disability from an interactional sociolinguistic point of view, as it shows how young disabled multilingual speakers engage with discourses of disability and helps us understand some of the everyday communication and meaning-making practices they use and the implications it has for their agency and voice. The analysis further demonstrates that these young speakers are well aware of how to talk about disability within these settings to enregister a practice of disability that involves talking about disability through tactics of indirectness and avoidance. In the next sequence, we see how Pam talks about her own disability in an interaction.

4.3 Absent presence of disability deflection

In extract 4.3 below we focus on what happens when someone talks about their own disability in interaction. In this extract, we will see how Pam challenges her imposed identity as a person with ADHD. Before Pam began to reflect on her own disability, Pam and I first concluded our interaction about Kevin. As I observed how Pam constructed an absent presence of disability, as demonstrated above, I decided to see if she would explicitly name Kevin's disability.

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Extract 4.3

Participants: (Pam, Jason, Abby)

English: Calibri; Kaaps: **Berlin Sans FB Demi**

1. Jason: so what like sparked that situation?

2. Pam: I think it was because (.) =

3. Jason: =was it simply because they weren't talking to him?

4. Pam: I think so (…) **ja,** but I don't sit with him at break he sits with someone else

5Jason: so when did all this happen?=

7. Pam: =it happened like last month a few weeks ago, it didn't

happen in this month it was in August when he did it, **ja** he just changed he just didn't do his

work he came with so a small book and he said all his work is in there so **n'** small book

8.   ((Picks up my field notebook))

9. on that day we just knew something was wrong he said like he knows all his stuff, all his

work is in that book his maths, his English we did.

10.Jason: you don't know what his condition is hey?

11. Pam: I don't think he has a condition (…) I think all of us have a working disorder, I don't

know but I'm here for my Maths only I don't have a problem but they put me on Ritalin course

I talk a lot, they think I'm ADDHD but I'm not! I know I'm not I wouldn't be able to sit still but

I can still sit still, **ja** some of them are here for anger issues I was at a normal school

In the final sequence of this interaction, I began by asking Pam a set of questions turns 1, 3, 5 and 10. While Pam answered each of the questions I posed to her, in an attempt to extract more information about Kevin's disability, we clearly see her hesitation. This is marked by her long pauses between her answers. In turn 7, Pam again goes on to describe how Kevin's behaviour was abnormal on the day of the incident when she answers "he just changed he just didn't do his work he came with so n small book and he said all his work is in there so n' small book" (turn 7). In this example, we see how Pam explains that not doing his work was a transgressive action on Kevin's part. Pam thus describes Kevin's actions as something other than normal. Here we see a slight hint of an unsaid trance. The "not" in this instance is indexical of disability or a disabled action because much like the metaphors, we see used above, by saying "not" Pam further implies that Kevin's actions are "not" the actions of a normal person and perhaps abled

person. The utterance "not" allows Pam to linguistically position Kevin as a disabled subject, as the "not" is a crucial part in the production of the identity construct of disability.

So when Pam suggests that Kevin did not do his work (turn 7), we see that she is able to disable him as she describes him in terms of what he is not instead of what he is. If we apply this to the idea of an absent presence of disability, we see that the exhorted articulation of the "not" is also a way for Pam to implicitly present Kevin as disabled, because the "not" enables her to avoid any mention of disability but still imply it. With regards to the notion of youth multilingualism, we can see that at the grammatical level of analysis, for these young disabled multilingual speakers such as Pam, structuring their sentences in order to illuminate the negation is yet another strategy that further helps to enregister an absent presence in interaction. Take for example the constant repetition of the double negative when Pam says "I'm not… I know am not" (turn 11). In the next part of the analysis, we see how Pam continues to use this tactic as she challenges the imposed identity of being disabled.

My final question that I posed to Pam in turn 10 was, "you don't know what his condition is hey?" In her response, she negotiates her own identity instead, as someone with ADHD. For example, in the beginning of her response, she states that she does not believe that Kevin "has a condition". She challenges my question and claims that "I think all of us have a working disorder I don't know". Returning to the idea of the absent presence of disability, the way in which she describes Kevin at this point is interesting, as she brings attention to the fact that "I don't think he has a condition" (turn 11). Here we see how it is important for her to highlight what Kevin is "not" as opposed to what he "is". One again it is important to position him as not being disabled. However, after a slight pause, she retracts her statement and she concludes with "I don't know". As she retracts her earlier statement, she uses herself as an example. We see how Pam draws attention to what she is "not"; she explicitly expresses that "I'm here for my Maths only I don't have a problem but they (.) put me on Ritalin course I talk a lot, they think I'm ADDHD but I'm not! I know I'm not". With this we see Pam attempt to identify Kevin and herself as not disabled, however, by deflecting her disability Pam is invisibly positioning herself as disabled.

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Kulick (2005) reminds us that a "crucial difference between identity and identification that are identifications are structured just as much by rejections, refusals and disavowals as they are structured by affirmations". In other words, although Pam attempts to position herself and Kevin as not disabled, by saying they "do not" have a condition or she is "not" ADD, she attempts to refuse her present position as an ADD person and illuminate the absent position as a non-ADD person.

In terms of the absent presence register of disability, we see that deflecting the presence is another way young multilingual speakers use language to position themselves as agentive in an attempt to alleviate themselves from a disabled position in interactions. Pam manages to add to the enregisterment of an absent presence of disability by rejecting her present identity, of being ADHD, and in so doing, is able to provide an alternative present. Pam is thus demonstrating a sense of agency and voice for herself as she reconstructs her own identity in the interaction.

4.4 Conclusion

The data analyzed above demonstrates how young disabled multilingual speakers with disabilities use language in interaction to talk about disability. The analysis, which comprises of an interaction with the main research participant, Pam, reveals that at Bubbles High, when talking about disability, there is a need to use language and multilingualism in a register that erase disability from context. In the analysis, I have argued that people with disability talk about disability in this way as they look to position themselves and others either as disabled or not disabled. Doing so provides the disabled student with a way to highlight their agency and voice during interaction. Considering the analysis then, it is clear that there is a need to highlight the way in which these students interact with one another as the analysis addresses how to ethically engage with people with disabilities, the importance of the language we use, as well as the way in which we use language in those interactions. The analysis further demonstrates how young disabled people linguistically inhabit a disabled identity and shows how they are able to reposition themselves as agentive in interaction. The interaction analyzed above illustrated how Pam and her peers are aware of how abled people speak for disabled people and the impact it has on the agency and voice of the disabled speaker.

In fact, the interaction analyzed above demonstrates the importance of positionality when studying the agency and voice of young multilingual speakers (abled or disabled). The analysis clearly shows that, because I inherited the position of not just the researcher, but disabled researcher I was afforded access to these intimate space and interactions. This further allowed me uncover how young disabled speakers talk about the sensitive topic of disability. And how they use particular stylize and registers to en-voice, position and reposition themselves firstly as agents and secondly, not just as disabled. The above analysis then demonstrates how young disabled speakers work towards rescripting their own agency as they attempt to inhabit the identity of "not" just disabled.

In the next chapter that follows, we analyze interactions that centre around food. With these interactions in mind, I will continue to analyze the youth multilingual practices of Pam and her peers, as well as how they stylize their youth multilingualism in interactions. We will also highlight the embodied intersectional experiences of language, race, gender and disability as we discuss how food acts as a binding agent that holds these topics together.
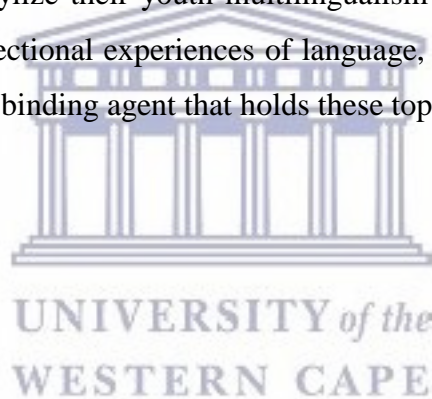
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Chapter 5

'You are what you eat': Embodied Intersectionality, Language and the Emotions of Consuming Food and Medication

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to describe and analyze how young, disabled multilingual speakers interact around multimodal activities that involve buying food, consuming food, and linking food to body weight, medicine and race. In this chapter, I also aim to demonstrate the implications these interactions have for agency. Below we will see how everyday mundane event provide significant insight into ideas of the disabled female body and the racialization of food. Importantly, I argue that not all disabilities and disabled people are alike, in their language socialization, and disabled multilingual speakers are not a monolith and in that way, who and where they interact with provide interesting insight into the dynamics of their agency.

Another agenda of this chapter is to analyze how young multilingual speakers talk about disability as an intersectional embodied experience. Before we proceed to the analysis of the relevant extracts below, it is important that I argue from the outset that the experience of being disabled does not occur in insolation but rather intersects with other social experiences and discourse such as race and gender. That is to say, that young disabled multilingual speakers are not just disabled and do not experience life as such. The young disabled people in this study deal with the same politics of identity as their able-bodied peers. Below we will take a closer look at how young disabled multilingual speakers use multilingualism in order to stress a visceral feeling towards food. These reactions that we will unpack demonstrate the intersectional embodiment of being a female living with a disability. We begin this chapter with a typical interaction at Bubbles High's tuckshop.

5.1 Buying Food: Multimodal, Embodied Interactions at the Tuckshop

On a typical day, Pam and her friends would co-construct and co-produce interactional activities at the school's tuckshop, buying food such as chips, water, and sandwiches and so on. The owner of the shop is Auntie Maggie and from time to time she would enlist one of

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Pam's friends to sell products from behind the window (see Picture 1 below). In extract 2 below, Kate wore the lapel microphone recorder and interacted with Devon in the sale of food early one Friday morning. The first author was nearby taking pictures of the interaction, from within and outside the tuckshop. It took place in the tuckshop. On this occasion, Kate had been enlisted to assist Auntie Maggie by not only preparing food, but also taking orders for food from her peers and teachers, handing over food and receiving the payment for food.

Picture 5.1: Buying food at Tuckshop (credit: Jason Richardson)

Below we will see how

Kate's enlistment to assist in the shop may seem mundane and every day in what are multimodal and embodied interactions (co-produced and co-constructed with others), she exercises a form of agency through a "collective, interactive, and emergent" (Al Zidjaly, 2009: 182) sales activity. In other words, what is significant about the interaction below is that, on the one hand, the participants in the interaction draw on linguistic resources (Kaaps, English, and so on) and non-linguistic resources (body position and movement) to co-construct interaction at the tuckshop and co-produce the discourse of selling food. On the other hand, the interaction is organized and managed by how well Kate is able to execute the embodied rhythms of cultural (be friendly, kind) and economic (be a sales person) models of selling goods

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at a Tuckshop, what Al Zidjaly, 2009, calls "conjoint actions"). She does this well, as is clear from the interaction below.

Extract 5.1

(Participants: Kate, Devon, Jason, Pam, Auntie Maggie, Teacher, Alan)

English: Calibri; Kaaps: **Berlin Sans FB Demi**

1. Kate: One. Teacher x said one ((walk with crying peer to the tuckshop)) Where's my phone?
   ((radio playing the background)) ((Kate, turns serve one of her peers))
2. Kate: Yes, Devon what Lays do you want?
3. Devon: how much is the Simba?
4. Kate: the same.
5. Devon: I'll come pick it up when we come back.
6. Kate: okay.
7. Devon: can I get water, is there flavour water? (hands over money)
8. Kate: (counting Devon's money) hmm, you need another one rand though
9. Auntie Maggie: you must put another one aside for him he already paid for one. 10. Devon what flavour you want? Must I put the Litchi aside?
10. Devon: ((walking away)) yes miss
((music playing in the background))
((Pam changes the song on the radio))
11. Kate: **hu-ha!** Come play emotional songs here
12. Jason (Researcher): ((laugh))
13. Pam: you **somma** come laugh here.
((Pam changes the song again to she belongs to the game by Troy Ave))
((Pam and other start signing I wanna fuck that girl))
14. Kate: this girl is very bad luck
15. Alan: why you say so?
16. Kate: ((inaudible)) (walks back to the tuckshop window)
17. Kate: what now Devon?
18. Teacher 1: Kate buy me chips
19. Kate: you want the water I put aside? ((gives him the water))
20. Kate: oh **jarne** this girl.
21: Jason: (laughs)
22. Kate: Why you laugh?
23. Pam: ((inaudible))
24. Kate: you fucking heartless

In the extract above, the interaction is transcribed from the moment Kate arrives, with her peers, at the Tuck shop. She assumes the role of sales person (embodies that personae) and proceeds

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to interact multimodally with Devon, Auntie Maggie, Teacher 1 and Pam. From line 2 to 8, she co-produces the sales discourse with Devon by first asking him what types Lays chips he would like to buy. Devon, undecided, asks instead how much the Simba chips would cost (line 3), to which Kate replies: "the same" (line 4). The interaction overlaps without interruption as Devon leaves the Tuck shop and informs Kate he will pick up his chips later – presumably (as is clear from the transcript) he puts in a pre-order to consume the chips later in the day. Then he asks if the tuckshop has flavoured water and Kate informs him it costs more than the chips. Anticipating an impasse in the interaction, Auntie Maggie joins and takes over the co-production of the sales interaction temporarily and instructs Kate to put aside a bottled water aside for Devon since he already paid for one, and followed on to ask Devon if he would like a litchi flavoured water (lines 9 and 10).

From lines 11 to 15, the focus of the interactions changes from the sale of food products to the song played by Pam, this time involving participation from the first author (line 12). Repositioning her role as friend, and fearing Pam's music playing to be a distraction, Kate (inside the Tuck shop) suggests that Pam is bad luck (line 14), suggesting she might attract a scolding directive from Auntie Maggie. But this frustration with Pam is about playing the type of love song, her choice in music. However, from line 17 she returns to her position as sales person and sells chips to Teacher 1 (line 18) and gives Devon's water (line 19).

On the face of it, the above interaction is typical of everyday, mundane types of interactions, but with a couple of exceptions. Firstly, the multimodal and embodied interactions of Kate and with others shed an interesting light on how young disabled multilingual speakers challenge the medical and deficit stereotype of object handling by people with an invisible disability (for example, ADHD, Dyslexia, and so on). In other words, what I argue here is that the manner in which Kate positions her body, frame the interaction, and are co-produced and co-constructed by her fellow participants' supports research that the agency of disabled people is typically achieved through interaction (see Al Zidjaly, 2009). Secondly, what is significant in this interaction is that Kate's co-produced and co-constructed work in the tuckshop are designed, mediated and negotiated through a layer of activities that involve requests (lines 2 and 19), directives, clarifications and object handling: that is, asking for a food product, directing for more money, co-constructing the announcement of the price of products and acts of paying,

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and using specific linguistic strategies to accomplish the interaction. Thirdly, Kate also strategically stylize her youth multilingualism by enunciating the sale and request of products through English mainly. But it's a local form of English mixed with Kaaps. In lines 11 and 20 we see how Pam and Kate go on to discuss Pam's choice of music. As Pam changes the song on her phone Kate disagree with it and says "**hu-ha!** Come play emotional songs here" (line 11). In line 12 we see that I laugh at what Kate has just said to Pam. To which Pam responds, "you **somma** come laugh here" (line 13). In this interaction we see the mixing of English with Kaaps and vice versa is used as linguistic resources to express distaste with music choice and laughter. Here we observe that by stylizing their youth multilingualism, Pam and Kate are able to express their unhappiness the music and laughter in a less threating tone. In other words, by mixing their youth multilingual resources Pam and Kate strategically manage the interaction to sustain play among their multilingual peers.

In the next section we go on to analyze interaction that centre around the consumption of food. Here we explore the intersection between food and race. I analyze how Pam and her Friend Masud talks about their favorite fast-food outlets.

5.2 Innocently Racializing Food: Eating Religious, Cultural Burgers

It is no surprise that race or the racialization of interaction would occur at the school given that the student population is predominantly coloured and black. Owing to its apartheid racially segregated history, and the larger enduring nature of colour, cultural and religious discrimination in South Africa today, I found that racial discourse endures as much as medical discourses of disability. In the below, I analyze the racialization of food along cultural and religious lines.

The extract below is a transcription of an interaction between Pam and Masud (her only Muslim friend) in the classroom. The topic of the conversation is a reflection on a Spur's menu special, a popular steakhouse franchise in South Africa. As part of Spur's 50th birthday anniversary, the franchise promoted a fifty rand special on popular menu items for consumption at a limited time frame, three days. Pam and Masud debated with each other whether fifty rand is too expensive for a burger.

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Extract 5.2
(Participants: Pam; Masud)
English: Calibri; Kaaps: **Berlin Sans FB Demi**; AAE: Ariel

1. Pam: I know fifty rand for a burger (and like that) at KFC where you can get a burger
2. Masud: (no comment)
3. Pam: KFC uhm 'cause Spur **sieka** not so **kwaai** anymore man
4. Masud: Steers **neh** I go there after
5. Pam: is it also the Muslim Spur that had that?
6. Masud: ask him
7. Pam: Masud
8. Masud: **ja**
9. Pam: is it also the Muslim Spurs that had that? The fifty rand burger?
10. Masud: Also, also, also.
11. Pam: now what if you **neh**[did you eat (normal Spur) before the Muslims [NC]
12. Masud: **nah**, we had to go to, Spur
13. Pam: was that the only Muslim Spur?
14. Masud: no man **nah** but there's other Muslim Spurs
15. Pam: I know but before it came out
16. Masud: nah, then I don't know
17. Pam: Do yous eat Spur? Now what it McDonalds and Burger King isn't Halaal? Yous won't die **neh**?
18. Masud: what?
19. Pam: cause I was
20. Masud: the same
21. Pam: I would eat Halaal, I would eat anything, I **soema** eat Halaal food, I eat Xhosa food, I eat anything
22. Masud: Xhosa food? [laugh]

The meta-reflection on food in the above extract comprise of an innocent, jocular racialization of the price of a burger across religious lines. It is accomplished without racial malice, but at the same time provides us with insight into the nature of racialized conversations among young disabled multilingual speakers. Pam and Masud's problem is that Spur's burger is too expensive and that a cheaper one can be bought at KFC or Steers. As Masud puts it: "Steers neh. I go there after" (line 4). From lines 5 to 16, Pam and Masud attempt to determine whether the Muslim Spur is also promoting the sale of a fifty-rand burger. As Pam directs the question to Masud, the latter seem to redirect the question to someone in the interactional circle. Since Masud is also Muslim, Pam presses him to answer the question, and he replies in the affirmative, which is repeated in line 10. This intrigues Pam and she asks "now what if you neh, did you eat (normal Spur) before the Muslims" (line 11), asking what type of burgers did

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Masud eating before a Halaal Spur was opened; to which Masud replied that they had to go to Spur. Even more intrigued, Pam asks Masud that if they (he and his family) ate a burger at McDonalds or Burger King, since those fast food outlets are not Halaal, whether they would die (line 17). Taken aback, Masud exclaims, "what?!" (line 18). Pam then goes on to state that she would eat anything and she would "soema eat Halaal food" and "eat Xhosa" (line 21). To which Masud laughs at uncomfortably and in agreement says "Xhosa food" (line 22). Clearly, Pam is not directly racializing food other than suggesting she would eat anything to make a point about eating in the interaction.

Both Pam and Masud implicitly and explicitly challenge the dominant ideology of what is good about junk food at Spur, preferring KFC and Steers instead. They attach importance to the religious and cultural values attached to junk food and the way they talk about food "like language" seem to "create both similarity and difference" (Karrebæk, 2012: 17). In other words, throughout their interaction Pam and Masud established food distinctions as the target of racialization along religious lines, not as malice but as a joke. And this distinction is drawn between places of eating, what to eat and how such eating is tied culturally to race and religious stereotypes and forms part of the discursive activity of being part or belonging to a consumptive or gastronomic group, because "discourse about food is actually doubly constructive of belonging" (Karrebæk, 2012: 2).

What is informative about the interaction, and not many occur in the archive of audio recorded data, is that Pam and Masud are socialized (like most South Africans) into racial frames of interaction – at home, at school, in the public places of the economy – and so it is perfectly plausible to conclude that the manner in which they assign ambivalent linguistic features to talk about a Muslim burger or Xhosa burger (following Bock, 2017) is reflective of larger discourses of race and racialization practices. These interactions thus demonstrate the intersectionality of discursive practices within interactions amongst young disabled multilingual speakers. We see in line 22, for example, how Pam suggests that she eats "Xhosa food". By linking an historically black group identity in stereotypical ways to food we can observe how she articulates her own intersectional assumptions about foods and ultimately blackness, through language. I use the word 'assumption' deliberately as Pam articulation of "Xhosa food" is a way for her to be humorous. In doing so, we are able to see that for Pam

saying "Xhosa food" is way for position herself as someone who will eat all types of food, and not being racist. The interactions also provide evidence that indeed young disabled multilingual speakers are aware of racial discourses and the practice of racialization and that being disabled does not mean you are precluded or are able to abscond fully from such discourses in interaction.

Another critical intersection that we can observe from the interaction above, is that Pam interestingly uses youth multilingualism as way to highlight her love for eating when she says "I would eat Halaal, I would eat anything, I *soema* eat Halaal food, I eat Xhosa food, I eat anything". We see that Pam use the word "*soema"* in the middle of her expression. Aside from acting a gap filler. The use of that grammatical feature here helps Pam to stress her love towards eating.

From a stylizing youth multilingualism perspective, the interaction is rich with code-switching between English, Kaaps and to a minor extent African-American English (AAE): Firstly, Pam and Masud mix their multilingual interaction in the use of tag questions, which we pointed previously are indicative of a local variety of English used across Cape Town but also a feature of Kaaps (lines 4, 11, 17); Secondly, they also use grammatical features such as the verb "sieka" (probably) (line 3) and adverb "soema" (will) (line 21). Thirdly, Masud switches between the lexical use of yes in Kaaps, that is, "ja" (line8) for positive agreement (also used in Afrikaans), and the negative use of no, phonetically expressed as "nah" (lines 12, 14 and 16), a form frequently used in African-American English (AAE). Significantly, this use of nah by Masud demonstrates that not only does he use English and Kaaps, local language varieties, but also a global target style that is part of his linguistic repertoire, but also a feature of youth language and popular culture (specifically, Hip Hop music).

5.3 Weight, Food and Medicine: Fat Talk Interaction and Prescription Tablets

In this section, I analyze a stylized, fat talk interaction and consider how such interactions are linked to medical discourses of disability, the consumption of Ritalin tablets, eating food, and body weight. The purpose of the fat talk analysis below is to provide an empirical reading of

how young, female girls such as Pam feel burdened by sociocultural discourses of weight size and medical discourses of disability that often frame her and her friends as multiply disabled (Arroyo and Harwood, 2012: 3). A focus on fat talk interactions, I argue, could shed light on how young disabled speakers deal with discourses of disability as tied to body weight and medicine.

Fat talk is a term originally introduced by Nichter and Vuckovic (1994), and as Arroyo and Harwood (2012) report, the focus was originally on the following conversation types: one, the food you ate and when and how long one exercised; two, the fear of being and becoming overweight and stretching in waste line; three, comparing how we eat and exercise against others; four, what others look like in terms of body size and looks; five, your own weight and body; and six, the use of supplements and muscle-building routines. Recent research indicates that fat talk is a "social phenomenon", "culture-bound" and occurs mainly among women and girls (Corning and Gondoli, 2012: 528; compare Britton, Martz, Bazzini, Curtin and LeaShomb, 2006: 247).

Fat talk can be an intense topic of a conversation. It may be used to segue into the performance of jokes about the body. It can also be a feature of self-degradation, particularly among women and used as a means to "fit in" a language and identity group (Nichter, 2000). Nichter reports in her study that women who perform interaction where the topic of their body came up employ discourse-interactional strategies of avoidance and silence to manage differences in value judgments of their bodies. Britton *et al.* (2006: 248), on the other hand, reports that women enact impression management in interaction to manage the social psychological impact of fat talk. The interaction between Pam and Alan below provides evidence of this.

Extract 5.3

(Participants: Pam; Alan)

English: Calibri; Kaaps: Berlin Sans FB Demi

1. Alan: [whispering] **oh jinne! oh jinne!**
2. Pam: just keep still[just sit [NC] I wanna try to do some (yoga)
3. Alan: [MC]

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4. Pam: [MC] **oh jinne** this [MC] ok I'm sorry for [MC] you don't ask a girl that (G) **voetjek(fuckoff)** I'm not gonna tell you

5. Alan: [MC]

6. Pam: no:

7. Alan: I weigh fifty-eight kilos[

8. Pam: If I tell you how much I weigh, (I'll) tell you now, I weigh forty-eight

9. Alan: I weigh ten

10. Pam: don't talk nonsense[I weigh forty-eight you idiot I was first fifty[[laughing] I was first fifty and so I started taking my (Ritalin) at home so I don't eat mos at night if I take it then I don't eat at night, so now they gonna give my prescription again and then I must [tongue click] see how much I weigh again but I ate a lot this week so I'm **sieka** going to be past fifty

11. Alan: now how are [NC] if you take[don't take it

12. Pam: how do I feel if I don't take it?

13. Alan: [NC][

14. Pam: when I don't take it? This is how I then am if I don't take it you idiot I don't take my tablets (at home)

15. Alan: [NC]

16. Pam: I throw it away or I keep it in my pocket then I use it for home when I study then I' **gefokus (focused)** [NC] you know neh

The interaction opens up with Alan and Pam engaged in an attempt to complete a yoga exercise. Surprised by this Alan exclaims his excitement in Kaaps, to which Pam asks him to keep his body at rest so that the yoga can be successfully performed. Two turns later, Alan seems to ask (though it is inaudible) Pam's weight (line 3). Taken aback by this, and obviously annoyed, she chastises Alan for asking her stating: "oh jinne this [MC] ok I'm sorry for [MC] you don't ask a girl that [G], voetjek, I'm not gonna tell you" (line 4), rupturing the interaction into an awkward stance. Realizing he was out of line, Alan repairs the interaction by informing Pam he "weigh[s] fifty-eight kilos" (line 7), to which Pam obliges with an "I weigh forty-eight" (line 8).

Following up with a snarky remark, Alan states he "weigh[s] ten" and this leads Pam into a rationalization that the reason she has such little body weight was because of her intake of Ritalin. As she puts it in line 10, her eating habits changed when she started consuming Ritalin and that affected her eating habits and her overall body weight, but that she is on a new "prescription again" and that she has been eating a lot to gain weight, "to be past fifty".

This revelation intrigued Alan and he asks her how she feels if she does not take Ritalin, to which Pam replied sarcastically: "This is how I then am if I don't take it you idiot. I don't take my tablets (at home)" (line 14). Alan's reply is inaudible, but Pam's follow up response reveals a stunning but not surprising truth to him about what she in reality does with her Ritalin pills: she throws them away or keep it in her pocket so that she can study and stay "gefokus" (focused) (line 16).

By not taking her tables, Pam invokes in the interaction a negative stance towards the hegemonic power of food stereotypes and medicine that as a disabled person she has to deal with on a daily basis. In other words, she makes a clear distinction in the interaction about what she understands about who controls her ability take her tables and expressing in a jocular way how she does not follow the rules when she actually consumes her tablets. The tablets, its effects on her, can be taken as the object of resistance to the medicalization of her body.

At a micro-linguistic level, the extract above provides evidence that fat talk for disabled students are also a peer-group type of interaction, and typically is linked to commentary that stems from what an ideal body type and the perceived body type are, that is, the difference between what we think we look like, what our body looks like versus what society, the media, and our culture have come to idealize. Pam's interactions with her friends about her body as linked to the medical discourse of consuming Ritalin helps us to understand how she and others manage talk and interaction as disabled multilingual speakers. It is clear that in the given interactions on body weight and tablets the speakers are aware of the ethical and socially sensitive nature of how their disabled body is spoken of, become a topic of conversation and can become the reason for framing their bodies with a carnal regime of non-disabled bodies. It is also clear that affective and visceral markers emerge, particularly in the use of language. Here we see language used as a resource to perform a stylized interaction: the disabled body that is eating and not eating, or taking Ritalin and not doing so.

From an intersectionality perspective here we again see that food is used a binding product for Pam to talk about the overlapping discourses of the consumption of Ritalin and the female body. Here we see just like other dietary medication Ritalin acts as a product that helps young

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women control their body weight. This further overlaps with broader social discourses of the female body shape and beauty, where young males view slenderness as desirable and 'fatness' undesirable. Pam seems to be aware of this fact as she makes references to the inappropriateness of enquiring about a female's body weight, when snaps at her interlocutor, "you don't ask a girl that [G], voetjek, I'm not gonna tell you" (line 4). Here we also see how Pam reclaims her agency and voice. By mixing English and Kaaps, Pam is able to rectify Alan in a friendlier manner and assume position of power by indicating to him what is acceptable and what is not.

Asking this question from a male position then is considered socially unacceptable. This is evident in the way Alan attempts to repair his question by making a joke about his weight saying he "weigh[s] ten" (line 9). In other words, it seems that Alan is attempting to distance himself from the offence he just caused. It is clear that Alan is not questioning the master narrative on the female body. Alan is rather interacting with a female peer and recognises that he has caused a momentary offence and attempts to repair it. At the same time, it allows him try and tell a joke within the interaction, as laughter can have a strong tool in an attempt to reposition oneself from a position they have slipped out of, this enables him to strengthen his repair his position and entertain his friend in interaction. It is also used as a tactic by Alan to maintain his agency as he realizes that Pam has positioned him in a particular way and thus attempt to escape it through humour.

This interaction overall reveals how the medicalization of disability strongly interlinks with discourses about the female body shape and beauty through food. If we take another look at the above interaction and in particular (line 10). We see how Pam expresses the intersectional embodied experience of living with disability and being female. On the face of it, we clearly see that Pam is talking about her body weight and how her ADD medication affects her eating habits, which helps her to further control her weight. This is seen when Pam says "I was first fifty and so I started taking my (Ritalin) at home so I don't eat mos at night if I take it". In this single utterance we can see that Pam does not only experience life as a young female who wants to achieve a desirable weight, but also experience life as someone with the disability of ADD. These two embodied intersections are interlinked through the discourse of food as we

observe how Pam's disability or rather the medication she consumes (Ritalin) because of it, enables her to control her intake of food and thereby achieve her target weight.

5.4 The Food that make us *Naar* (Nauseous)

A final theme that runs through the interactional data are the visceral reaction towards certain foods that are brought up in conversation and creates a state of nausea in Pam and her fellow interlocutors. In the extracts analyzed below, I want to illustrate how talking about eating certain food types and its association to an affective discourse of disability points to how young disabled multilingual speakers, at least in this particular context, deal with being socialized into consuming food. More specifically, we illustrate below how Pam – the main interlocutor of the interaction – takes an affective stance towards certain food types that causes her to become "naar" (Afrikaans for becoming nauseas). In extract 5.4 below, the conversation turns to expresses her dislike for eating peanut butter.
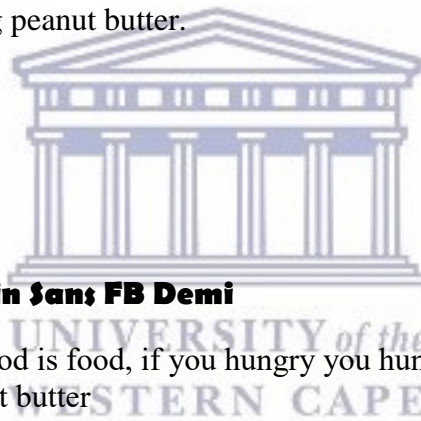
### Extract 5.4: Peanut Butter

(Participants: Pam; Alan)

English: Calibri; **Kaaps: Berlin Sans FB Demi**

1. Pam: However you say it food is food, if you hungry you hungry, just don't give me peanut butter I don't eat peanut butter
2. Alan: [unclear speaker NC]
3. Pam: don't lie, you eat peanut butter
4. Alan: I said I don't like (you when you stay there)
5. Pam: oh: why?
6. Alan: [NC]
7. Pam: peanut butter don't [NC]
8. Alan: [NC peanut butter
9. Pam: you know what made me hate it[
10. Alan: I finish[I finish a whole jar
11. Pam: a jar uuegh[you know what made me hate it neh I[[laughing] my mommy used to put peanut butter in: that: time: still and (like) it made me **naar:**
12. Alan: [NC] eat it too much
13. Pam: **ja:** eat it too much I get too **naar** of it

In the above extract, Pam and Alan's conversation turns to eating peanut butter, a popular bread paste, and why they do not like to consume it. Pam suggests from line 1 that although she would eat any food when hungry, she would refuse peanut butter. Alan mumbles something not

clearly picked up by the recorder, but which I assume is a negative statement by Alan about not eating the bread paste, and to which Pam challenges Alan, stating that she does "eat peanut butter" (line 3). But Alan provides a reason for this in the next line – she does not like the paste, and Pam asks why. A few lines down, from line 9 to 13, Pam and Alan provide reasons for why they do not like eating peanut butter. In Alan's case, she ate "a whole jar" (line 10), overconsumed (line 12), and as a result refuses to consume more. Pam links the consumption of peanut butter to nausea: her visceral reaction to Alan's revelation that she ate a whole jar of peanut butter causes her to reaction in disgust ("a jar uuegh", line 11), but she qualifies her reaction with the revelation that the reason she hates the food type is because her mother used to pack her lunch and because of the smell or even the taste of the paste made her "naar" (nauseas). Alan states that the reason why peanut butter became the cause of Pam's nausea was because she ate too much of it, to which Pam agreed.

Later on in the interaction, the conversation moves on to a general discussion with other participants, but Pam and Alan revisit the consumption of food that causes nausea. This time the topic is about Milo Porridge.
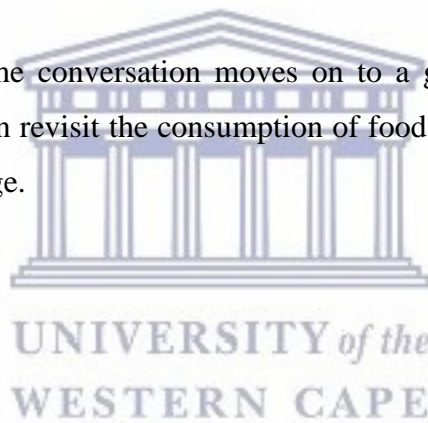
Extract 5.5: Milo Porridge

(Participants: Pam; Alan)

English: Calibri; **Kaaps: Berlin Sans FB Demi**

1. Alan: [MC] I used to eat it <u>every</u> morning I got so sick of it never ate it for a long time now I'm starting to eat it again (Milo porridge)[

2. Pam: like I think I did eat it like a lot when I was small but aggh

3. Alan: and Milo porridge I used to[**joh**! Like that used to like it[

4. Pam: and I don't like the smell of it[

5. Alan: and I got **naar** of it neh and then now I'm starting to eat it again

6. Pam: so I don't it's like it make me **naar** man, you see

In both extracts above, there is a clear visceral reaction to eating food that causes nausea. The clear dislike of certain foods is linked to smell and taste of food. My argument here with regards

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to the significance of this analysis is that both Pam and Alan, through a prolonged medicalization of their disability, and the changing patterns of their diet (so I assume, as I did not follow on this later), has influenced how they differentiate the food types that causes nausea and which ones do not. More specifically, here we see Pam and Alan reveal in the interaction that foods like Peanut butter and Milo porridge is part of a negative embodied gastronomic experience. These expressions of disgust and dislike of these particular types of food are said to be typical among their peer group, I would further argue, but that it is also based on individual preference and an implicit challenge of medical discourses of disability. With respect to the stylization of English and the code-switching to Kaaps in both extracts above, we find how Pam and Alan's use of those language varieties are performed along *deictic* interactional frames since both peanut butter and milo porridge are food types that students in the special needs school under consideration typically consume and dislike (following Bradbey, 1997).
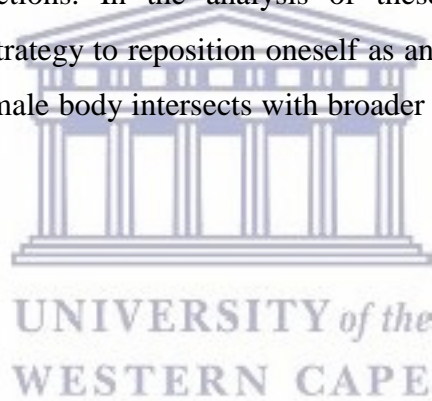
5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to present a data analysis of young disabled speakers and their interactions around talk of buying food, consuming food, and the effects of food on body weight and the use of medicine (Ritalin) and food, and food that causes nausea. On the one hand, it is clear that young disabled speakers are well aware of the sociocultural and medicinal demands that they have to bare. In fact, as the analysis demonstrates Pam and her friends treat their own and others experiences with empathy and affection. They are also much reflective of their own experiences as they connect the consumption of food and the medicalization of their bodies to peer group precarity and the performance of voice. Each interaction demonstrates how Pam and her friends make sense of their disabled environments, whether it is through talk about others not being included in the group, multimodal interaction in place (such as the Tuckshop), talking about Muslim and Xhosa type foods, talking about weight, food and Ritalin, and food that causes nausea.

On the other hand, the participants in this study – while they may not state this explicitly – exercise a form of agency that allows them to take control of interactions not only to feel good, but useful for others in interaction (as in the case with Kate helping out at the Tuck shop,

Extract 2). In other words, Pam and her friends exercise a type of agency through language and discourses of disability in interaction that assist them in critically approaching what it means to be disabled (whether this is stated explicitly or implicitly). The data in this chapter also demonstrates that while their disability is not visible, their agency (and traces thereof) is. Ultimately, what the analysis demonstrates is that young disabled speakers organize and manage their interactions to challenge discourses of disability that box them into minority-majority rhetoric. The topics around which the interactions were focused helps us to understand that students like Pam and her peers (like everyone young person in South Africa) are under pressure to conform to expected norms and standards of peer group interaction that are more often than not co-constructed and co-produced in school settings.

The interactions analyzed above also demonstrated some of the intersectional discourse that emerge during youth interactions. In the analysis of these interactions, we see how multilingualism is used as a strategy to reposition oneself as an agentative. We also see how discourses of race, and the female body intersects with broader social discourses of disability through language and food.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Discussion: A note on the future of sociolinguistics and disability

6.1. Introduction

In writing this thesis, I set out to examine how young disabled multilingual speakers exercised agency and voice through language and multilingual practices. I realized, first and foremost, that a study of this nature needed to lead by data and not theory. As I set to build this project from the ground up, I was able to see how language, and by extension, multilingualism, was used as a recourse by young disabled multilingual speakers to produce a sense of agency and voice. I argued from an intersectional sociolinguistic standpoint that in order to understand how those young people use multilingualism to achieve agency and voice we must explore their everyday interactions. This study then has tried to develop current research on disability and particularly youth multilingualism, as I investigated how young disabled multilingual speakers use different registers and styles to talk about disability. Using youth multilingualism as a starting point, I was able to look critically at how young people used language during social interactions to exercise agency and voice. This was because youth multilingualism is an approach to multilingualism that views language as a dynamic and mobile process that accounts for the interesting ways young people use their multilingual resources, and in so doing, produce their own voices.

Analysing the multilingual practices of young disabled multilingual speakers, as I have shown, sheds light on the complexities of disability and youth multilingual interactions. In particular, I have revealed how young disabled multilingual speakers engage with disability at the discursive level. I decided to investigate multilingualism and disability because they are in my opinion, two influential apparatus as we work toward social transformation in South Africa. In other words, multilingualism and disability help us to rethink the ethics of engagement, as disability reminds us that our differences are the one thing we all have in common and multilingualism is the site of engagement where we rework our vulnerabilities.

In this final chapter, I will bring together the common themes that I have explored in this thesis. In this chapter we (re)explore and summarize the study as a whole. We will begin this chapter by re-examining the importance of positionality. Here I will once again outline my position as the researcher as I attempt stress the importance of ethics. Hereafter we go on to discuss the significance of rescripting discourses of disability to recapture a disabled person's sense of sense of agency and voice. Finally, we revisit chapter 5 and look at the style of youth multilingualism used by young disabled multilingual speakers as they themselves work towards recapturing their agency and voice. We will also revisit the practice of embodied experiences of being disabled.

We begin by drawing attention to one of my main research challenges, namely, positionality. Before, we discuss how young disabled speakers position themselves through language, I would like to talk about my position as the researcher. In chapter 3, I stated that I inherited the position as not just 'the researcher' but as the 'disabled' researcher. I inherited this position because I chose to conduct my research at my alma mater, which I have called *Bubbles High*. Having been a student at the place, my positionality presented one of my main methodological challenges. It was a challenge for me because I felt that I constantly had to deal with a preconceived identity of myself. In other words, I struggled with the position as a researcher, as I was reminded of my reputation as an ex-student. However, after I reflected on time in the field, I realized my reputation did provide me with a sense of social capital, which further allowed me to move from an outsider to an insider. After I had gained access to intimate conversations and interactions about disability, I was able to see just these young multilingual speakers use different styles and registers to talk about their disability as they go about (re)assuming a sense of agency and voice.

Once I had collected the data, this issue of positionality remerged. As I set to analyze the interactional data, I asked myself, how do you ethically write about sensitive interactions, since I felt I had an ethical responsibility to maintain the human dignity of my participants. One of the ways I felt I could achieve this responsibility was to outline my position as a disabled ethnographic researcher. By this I mean I am a self-identifying disabled researcher doing research other young disabled multilingual speakers. Given that this study aimed to analyze how young disabled people exercised agency through language, I further believed of the need

to study my position. It is for this reason, that I began this study with my own story, but also so that the reader can see that I am writing from the position of a disabled person. By reflecting on my own position, it helped me answer: How do youth at a special needs school use their multilingual resources to construct and position themselves and others with respect to disability?

For many of my participants in this study, in particular Pam (one of the main participants), positionality was an important aspect of their identity. In chapter 4, for example, we found that Pam talks about how teachers would employ strategies of indirectness or avoidance in order to talk about disability. By bringing these strategies into focus, Pam was able to rescript the discourse of disability and enregister a discourse that produces a sense of agency for one of her male peers as well as herself.

Furthermore, we found within the interactions that Pam carved out a new space in order to establish authority and control over the conditions and discourse. As she does so, she is able to (re)position herself with respect to her disability. Finally, I conclude Chapter 4 by suggesting that Pam is attempting to renegotiate the way her teachers perceived her. Another important observation I made in chapter 4 was how the use of particular metaphors and euphemisms as substitutes for disability has become an enregistered practice at *Bubbles High*. In other words, *when* talking around disability in interaction young disabled multilingual talk in a register of avoidance and the explicit mention of the word disability. Here we found that the strategies of avoidance and indirectness are used to reshape the discourse of disability, because when the learners enregister discourses of disability, it provides them with a sense of voice as they were able to talk about their disability from their own perspectives. Chapter 4 answers the second research question in Chapter 1.

6.2. The significance of food in interactions about disability

The extracts analyzed in chapter 5 focused on the communicative and meaning making practices of young disabled multilingual speakers. The analysis demonstrated how the discourse of disability and food, and more specifically fat talk, intersect. Here I asked, what does an analysis of linguistic style indicate about the way young people with disabilities engage

with broader discourses of disability? It is clear from the analysis in chapter 5, which focused significantly on interactions about food and disability, that the interactions showed how Pam and her peers talked about the disabled in relation to medical discourses and how the consumption of food in relation to the consumption of medicine, particularly Ritalin, suggested that stylizing the discourse of disability overlapped with ways of talking about the disabled body. Together, all the extracts analyzed hold a number of implications for Disability Studies and Sociolinguistics, that is, a turn toward interaction studies of disabled speakers, young and old. In this respect, I turn now to a few suggestions as to how that turn can occur.

Firstly, we need to develop an interactional approach to disability studies that can advance a methodology to investigate closely how agency emerges so that we can "understand the deep ontological integrity of the [disabled] subject beyond the idealizations that govern and discipline dominant thinking" (Soudien and Baxen, 2006). This shift is important because we will be able to map agency among disabled speakers in a comprehensive way, particularly as such agency most likely will be embodied in interaction.

Secondly, we have to move toward a transformative notion of disability agency and voice. As is clear from the analysis, young disabled multilingual speakers determine what they say about discourses of disability, about themselves, and they do so either as a way to be transgressive, to determine the real effects of medical discourses have on them, their individualism, or group affiliation and interaction. Not too long ago, Bantjes *et al.* (2015: 13) argued that the Cerebral Palsy (CP) students in their study at a special needs school challenged the way we talk and, indeed, write about disability in a liberal affirmative framework: "Talk about disability…is commonly couched within the framework of rights and liberation talk in South Africa". In my interpretation, I would like to amplify, in conclusion, Bantjes *et al.* by suggesting there is a need to develop a transformative notion of disability agency and voice that could be explored through language and multilingual choices in space and place.

6.3. Limitations of the Study

Given the discussion on agency of voice, in the final section, I want to suggest a future for studies on sociolinguistics of disability in the South. Before we go on to do so, however, I would like to point out the limitation in my own study. In both my analysis chapters, in terms of gender and language, it is clear that the focus is much more on female voices than male voices. The reason for this was that this study was built from the ground up. Pam, Kate, and Amy, like many others, were asked to participate, and many male participants were not willing to do so. Although many male multilingual speakers interacted with them, I felt for ethical reasons it would only be fair to explore what the main research participants said and did in the interactions. Besides being a major limitation of my project, it helped in many respects to emphasise the importance of positionality in disability, and even more so, disability studies in the South (see chapter 3).

6.4 Importance of Positionality

Given that my main research participants were all females, I had to understand my role as a male, and how women's voices are often more silenced than men's. I also had to recognise that young women have to deal with many other cultural practices that men do not necessarily have to. A case in point was how Pam talked about ideologies of the female body and the consumption of food and medicine. To such an end, the analysis suggests that we need in disability studies to clearly state our position (from a disabled body perspective or abled body perspective) and how our beliefs impact the way we represent a particular vulnerable group in society. In particular, positionality is a useful concept to emphasise the ethics of engagement - an important factor that, in my opinion, needs to be considered with disabilities studies in the South. The concept of positionality helps us to rethink the ethics of ethics, as it allows us to look at disability from a Southern perspective. This perspective does not perceive disability as a problem for western medical experts to solve, instead, we remember that not everything can or must be explained - there are certain things that can be left to our imaginations as it "preserves diversity and advance[s] exchanges [of knowledge] … upon networks that abolish the primacy of any one centre of understanding" (Crowley, 2006:107). I have argued that this study, with a strong bend towards the South, is built from the ground up and in so doing, we saw the importance for positionality to emerge from the data. The data analyzed in this study demonstrates how it is important for young disabled multilingual speakers to speak from their

own position in order for them to produce a sense of voice and agency in interactions and as they go about sharing their experiences in local varieties and registers to construct a discourse of disability that does not stigmatize and generalize their identity.

6.5. Conclusion

It is my hope that this project aids us in rethinking the politics of disability. By using youth multilingualism as a point of departure, I have tried to bring into focus the importance that the communicative and meaning making practices of young disabled people have on studies of disability, as language continues to be overlooked in disabilities studies. However, much work still remains to be done because, as I state in the introduction of this thesis, disability and multilingualism are valuable phenomena and practices to rethink the ethics of engagement, as we aim to transform South African society.

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